

QUITE

AT HOME



F·C·BURNAND



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QUITE AT HOME.

COLLECTED UNIFORM
ILLUSTRATED EDITION
OF
F. C. BURNAND'S
WRITINGS.

From "Punch."

Q U I T E

A T H O M E 

By F. C. BURNAND

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY THOUGHTS," "VERY MUCH ABROAD,"
"RATHER AT SEA."

WITH

Illustrations from "Punch."

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QUITE AT HOME.

IN A COUNTRY HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

GOING A FISHING—OLD-FASHIONED COUNTRY HOUSE—BOODELS OF
BOODELS—THE BUTLER AND THE EEL—THE FISH-POND.



“H AVE N’T seen you for an age ! Name your day, and come down. Place looking lovely.”

This was from Boodels of Boodels. He is quite right. I have not see him for an age ; or, at all events, for a considerable time. It is, in fact, some years since I was invited to his place, to assist in dragging the pond. That ceremony was deferred *sine die*, and we did not drag that pond, brave boys, and “ we did not catch that Whale ” — or, rather, that Eel. There has

always been a big Eel—a tremendously big Eel—in Boodels’ pond.

It's a traditional Eel—: it is to Boodels' pond what the Sea Serpent is to the ocean.

The Eel in Boodels' pond has been seen more than once: in fact, it must have been *seen* to have been appreciated; but it is difficult to arrive at the fortunate person who *has* seen him. The Head Gardener hasn't, but he knows he's there." But why should a Head Gardener see an eel more than anybody else? He has nothing to do, professionally, with the fish-pond. Boodels' Head Gardener wears moustachios, and has a military air. He evidently delights in planting all his vegetables and fruit in lines. He passes along the lines, reviewing, as it were, his troops. When the right moment arrives, he will say, "Up, Strawberries, and at 'em!" The Under Gardener, who is, somehow, officially connected with the ducks, is reported to have seen the Eel.

This individual, however, is of a taciturn disposition, and if he *has* seen the Eel, he won't tell. When asked about the Eel, he smiles, wags his head (a sign of pleasure with him when addressed, and is, probably, a habit acquired from having a good deal to do with the animals on the establishment), and mutters something about there being a big "Eel" somewhere (he is unintelligible beyond this), and walks on. My private impression, after awhile, founded upon observation, is that if this Under Gardener *has* seen the Eel, *he has eaten him*. Hence his silence, and hence the smile. Hence, also, the mysterious legends still current at Boodels', and in the neighbourhood, about the marvellous Eel. The Butler, in idle moments (of which, I fancy, he has several at command), has set lines for this Eel.

[*Happy Thought.*—*The Butler and the Eel*, a fine subject for a poem.]

No result. The Eel, if there, stayed where he was, and the Butler retired.

Everybody having nothing better to do at Boodels', wanders down to the pond, hears from some one (generally from Boodels himself), who finds this subject likely to interest his visitors—visitors being always interested where there is a probability of their getting something by it, and that something, eatable)—about

the Eel, and immediately says, meditatively, as if it were quite a new and original idea, "I should like to catch that Eel."

"Why," the visitor diffidently adds, turning to his host, "why don't you set lines?"

Boodels smiles at this. It is what every visitor has said to him from the first day he took the house with the fish-pond. He only replies, in a guarded manner, that, from *what he has heard* (as the Police say, "from information received,") he believes that any one fond of the sport can have capital fishing in the pond.

[*Happy Thought.*—To say to Boodels; "There may be 'capital fishing,' but is there 'capital catching?'"

"That depends on the fisherman," replies Boodels, drily.

I don't think so. It seems to me to depend upon the fish.]

There was a Poet stopping at Boodels' who made this suggestion about setting lines. I seconded the motion, for several reasons. *First*—Because it was something to do. *Secondly*—Because I had often heard of "lines," and wanted to find out what they were. *Thirdly*—Because I wished to find out if the Poet, who tried to appear so sporting, knew any more about it than I did. Judging from his blank look, when Boodels, pointing to something on the ground that appeared to me like a very large and very dirty-white tee-totum wound round with thick cord, said, "Here's the Trimmer and the lines," I am convinced that the Poet had not the smallest idea what he had been talking about.

The Poet said "Oh!" and looked at the Trimmer, then at me.

I had only found out a few minutes before that he was a Poet. I should have thought from his general appearance that he was clerk in something—not "in orders" but something official. The only outward sign of genius about him is his nose. He has a low forehead (I don't believe in foreheads), and a very large nose. What he loses in forehead he makes up in nose. Most poets are strong in the nose. Boodels, who is always enthusiastic about his friends, specially if only recently made, tells me that Hamlin Mumley is a very clever man, simply "*the* cleverest man," he (Boodels) "had ever met." This sounds as if Boodels' circle of acquaintances were limited. A consoling thought is "present company always excepted." "He has," adds Boodels vaguely,

"something coming out very soon ; and he's had some wonderful reviews in the papers."

"What papers?" I ask, as I don't remember to have seen the name of Hamlin Mumley anywhere.

"Oh," replies Boodels, evidently not expecting to be cross-examined on the subject, "I don't know. You can read 'em for yourself." And so the subject drops.

I eye Mumley distrustfully. At present "the cleverest man that Boodels ever knew" is throwing bits of stick into the pond, and frightening the ducks. Our attention is now centered on the Trimmer. It looks to me such an awkward antiquated piece of machinery that I cannot understand any eel, associated as he is with slipperiness, wriggling, and low cunning generally, could be caught by such a very apparent trap as this Trimmer. It occurs to me that, as a boy, I used to learn "easy lessons" out of a Trimmer. These were, if I remember rightly, *Trimmer's Guide to the Alphabet*,—"(By the way, I wonder at what distance from the Alphabet one would require a Guide?)—and so, perhaps, a Trimmer, piscatorially, is a sort of *Little Angler's First Step to Fishing*. The second title might be *Line upon Line*.

There is another friend (new to me) of Boodels staying here—a fresh-coloured, round-faced, light-moustached, small stout man, always ready to smile. His expression seems to be saying beseechingly, "Do, please, make me smile! I'm only waiting to be asked to smile!" I set him down at once as a Gentleman Farmer. I propose talking to him about crops. I will lay myself out to get some information about corn, hay, pigs, poultry, and turnips. I begin by a few remarks on the weather being bad for the country. He smiles, and fancies that it is worse in some parts than others.

"It's bad for crops," I suggest, throwing much sympathy with his supposed losses into my tone.

"Is it?" he replies ; then adds, inquiringly, "Do you know this part of the country well?"

"No," I say ; but I thought *he* did. No, he doesn't : in fact, it's his first visit. The conversation flags. Getting Boodels alone, I ask him,

"Who's that?"

"Oh!" replies Boodels, "I thought you knew. "That's Pogmore the Composer."

"What does he compose?" I ask.

"Why music, of course," retorts Boodels, rather testily. He never likes to be pressed too closely as to his friends' accomplishments. He accepts a clever friend as a genius, *en gros*, and disdains details as a disloyalty.

"He's one of the cleverest men I ever met," says Boodels, still speaking of the Composer. "He's got something coming out." He says this as if Pogmore was going to exemplify, personally, a Darwinian Theory. He explains, however, "an Oratorio, I think—Sims Reeves, Santley; in fact," adds Boodels, rather vaguely, and being a little tired of the subject, "*everybody's* going to sing in it."

It occurs to me that the Oratorio must be a work of gigantic proportions. We all walk down the garden to the fish-pond. As a matter of fact, the walks in Boodels' garden are limited. You either go to the fish-pond or you don't. The walks are:—*Towards* the fish-pond, which means loitering in a beautiful flower-garden; *to* the fish-pond, round the fish-pond, which includes chance interviews with curious-looking creatures and big rats; *half-round* the fish-pond, and back the same way, nervously; and when you don't go to the fish-pond, you go to the kitchen-garden.

As a rule, every one on arriving for the first time at Boodels', looks out of the drawing-room window, and immediately exclaims, "Oh! let's walk as far as the fish-pond!"

There has never been an exception to the rule, except in the instance of a grumbling old Gentleman, who on his arrival in the middle of summer, begged that all the windows and doors might be shut; growled out that the place lay very low; that the beauty of the flowers, specially the roses, was only a clear sign of the dampness of the atmosphere; and, on being asked if he would like to walk as far as the fish-pond, replied, surlily,

"No; he didn't want to catch his death of cold, for the sake of looking at a duck-puddle!"

Boodels never forgave this old man. "In fact," said Boodels, justly irritated, "if it hadn't been for his age, I'd have ordered a fly, and had him taken back to London at once."

As we walk to the fish-pond, Boodels and Mumley first, then Pogmore and myself, I start Pogmore on the subject of music, instead of crops. He informs me that he is composing an Oratorio on the subject of *The Ark*. "A grand subject?" he suggests, inquiringly, as if he had some lurking doubt about it himself.

"Very," I reply. "Only——"

"Only what?" he asks.

"Only," I say, "aren't the animals a difficulty?"

"Ah!" he exclaims, with the air of being evidently relieved by this being my only objection, "but I see my way to *that*. All I want is a good libretto. That's what I'm sticking for now—a good libretto. I wish you'd try your hand."

I feel highly complimented, but, with innate modesty, I suggest that he should ask Hamlin Mumley. "*He*," I point out, "is a Poet." I don't infer from this that I'm *not*. "And," I add, "*he* would write you a magnificent libretto." Implying that *mine* would be a more magnificent one. Pogmore *has* asked him. Mumley has replied that *good* poetry is quite thrown away on music: that the librettist gets no fame—only abuse; and that no one ever yet heard the words of any song, or ever cared to ask who wrote them.

"I rather agree with him," says Pogmore.

So do I. But then why ask *me* to write the libretto?

"See what you can do for me, will you?" says Pogmore, carelessly. You *might* strike out something."

He says this much as he would have suggested that I *might* catch the Eel, if I only lived long enough, and fished regularly. I promise, however,—to think of it.

Tom Milburd,—younger brother of our old friend the Jester,—has run down to Boodels for a few days. Boodels says he likes to have him there because he's "invaluable in a country-house—he makes everything so lively"—which is not much of a compliment to *us*; as if *we* made everything so dull, and *he* had to be invited to counteract our depressing influence.

Tom Milburd, coming down the walk from the house, hears Pogmore say, *à propos* of the Oratorio, that there's so much "character in it." Milburd, Junior, is a very loud man, and his laugh is overpoweringly noisy. He has got a trick of bursting

into his loudest laugh, generally about nothing, or about something that only *he* himself sees the fun of, close by your ear. He keeps his laughs, as it were, in shells, and suddenly explodes them. He comes down between us, and exclaims, in a stentorian voice, "Oh, I know what he's talking about. His old Oratorio." Here he roars: No one can get a word in, and he continues, still roaring, "Capital subject—ha! ha! ha! Noah and all his little men—ha! ha! ha!—with long coats, and sticks, and flat hats. Which are the wives, and which are the sons? Eh? Whichever you like, my little dear; you pays your money and you—ha! ha! ha!"

And here he is off again, as if this venerable quotation were one of the raciest things he had heard for years. We look serious. Pogmore is annoyed. But Milburd doesn't care. He takes Pogmore by one arm and me by the other, shaking us both as if to get a laugh out of us by sheer force—he is very muscular—and begins again, just as loudly as ever.

"Then the music!—ha! ha! ha! The March Past of the Animals into the Ark! and the songs!—ha! ha! ha! I say, though, how do you get over their being all duetts?" Here Milburd goes into convulsions of laughter, but he won't leave go of our arms, which he shakes and squeezes during his laughter. And this is the man whom Boodels says "is invaluable in a country-house, and keeps everything lively"! Why he'll drive me wild with his voice alone. As to Pogmore, he'll be mad before he reaches the fish-pond. Milburd shouts out, still bursting with laughter, "They must be duetts, because they went in in couples. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Nonsense!" says Pogmore, irately. "The music will be descriptive."

"Of course," exclaims Milburd. "I see it. Bassoon for the Elephant,"—here he makes noises which he thinks represent the instruments in question, and, thank heaven, releases our arms, in order to pretend to be playing first double bass, and then the ophicleide,—“ophicleide for Lion; the Black-beetles will be a difficulty. The Donkey's easy enough."

"Yes, you can play that," cuts in Pogmore, quickly.

I feel this retort was weak on Pogmore's part.

"No objection to learn, if you'll teach me," returns Milburd. Then he suddenly seizes my arm again, and squeezes it roughly, as if to point his repartee, which he repeats three times, and roars and shakes with laughter.

At this point I should like to come to Pogmore's aid, and put Milburd down, only I haven't got the right thing to say. Milburd never knows where to stop, except at Boodels', where he certainly knows how to stop.

This is the first half hour after my arrival (we are expecting dinner), and we are all down by the fish-pond. The fish-pond has a quieting effect, momentarily, on Milburd. He is silent. Then the influence of the place overcomes Hamlin Mumley, the Poet; and, turning to Boodels, he says, solemnly,

"There must be a great many fish here. Why don't you set some lines?"

Happy Thought.—(Suggested politely to both the clever men.) If Mr. Mumley will compose the lines, Pogmore will set them. Both eminent men much pleased. So is Boodels. He considered this compliment, he tells me afterwards, very neat, and "so epigrammatic." Milburd (who is evidently jealous, and who never turned a smile when he heard it, though I feel sure he'll go and use it afterwards as his own) says, "Oh, very epigrammatic! What's 'epigrammatic' mean? ha! ha! ha! eh?"

This offends Boodels, as it implies that he (Boodels) has used a long word without knowing its meaning. We walk silently towards the house. Boodels begins to doubt whether Milburd is as funny as he had once thought he was, and whether he hasn't become rather coarse.

"How about the Trimmer?" calls out Pogmore from the pond, and he is seconded by the Poet.

Boodels turns. Personally he doesn't care about fishing, considering it dirty work, and, from long experience, he does not (I am convinced) believe in his own pond, or in the Eel. But these doubts he keeps to himself.

"If you like to go and dig for worms," he replies—(this to Pogmore and the Poet!—fancy the two cleverest men Boodels had ever met being sent to *dig for worms!*—so thoughtless of Boodels.

If you *do* have a Poet and Composer staying with you, they ought to be treated properly and not sent to *dig for worms*. I am quite hurt by it: and I'm sure *they* must feel it, though they say nothing)—“you can get some very fine ones near the Pig-stye, and then you can set the lines yourselves. But,” he adds, looking at his watch, “you won't have much time now, as the gong for dinner will sound in five minutes. See about it to-morrow.”

So nothing is settled about the catching the Eel in the pond. But we've got at least a week before us at Boodels'.



CHAPTER II.

STILL WITH BOODELS OF BOODELS—PLEASURES OF RETIREMENT—
BIRDS, BEASTS, AND FISHES—THE TROUBLES AND CARES OF
BOODELS—AN AWFUL REVELATION.



FIRST Night.—Everyone to bed early, except Boodels, who didn't ask his visitors into the country to go to bed early. They say they've had enough of late hours in town. Boodels disappointed.

First Morning in the Country House.—Every one up and out very early, except Boodels. The Poet and Composer go out separately; probably for inspiration and respiration. Milburd Junior summoned to town by telegram.

I lounge on a garden-seat, wondering at my own inamense capabilities for doing nothing. Masterly inaction.

First Summer Morning.—Shall I open the window while dressing, and admit the balmy air? I will. I find that if I had opened it I should have admitted a wasp, or something of that sort, which at this moment comes burring, not buzzing, and flopping itself against the glass. Lucky I didn't open it. Nothing more unpleasant than a big wasp in your dressing-room *when you're not prepared to receive visitors.*

I mention this to Boodels when he *does* appear. He wishes it *had* been a wasp, as that would be a sign of fruit.

What I admire about Boodels' place is that there are lots of living things wandering about. There is repose, but animation. There are dogs and cats, ducks and bees, poultry, pigeons, a parrot, and birds everywhere.

"How happy one could be here," I say to Boodels. "I envy you, always living in the country."

Boodels, however, replies that I have no idea of his troubles and bothers, and that he has had serious thoughts of giving up the place.

I protest (in the name of hospitality) against any such proceeding. If the other guests were here, they would join me.

"Ah," says Boodels, "you don't know."

Then we walk to the pond.

Boodels is melancholy and reserved. I admire everything ; but whatever excites my admiration, only draws from Boodels a tale of woe.

"You ought to have excellent fishing," I say, repeating what I'm sure I've heard a dozen times from Boodels himself when in a good-humour.

"Ah !" he replies. "I don't know what's the matter with this pond. It was an awfully dull winter, and the fish were found all floating about dead."

Horrible ! As ghastly as the *Ancient Mariner's* story. What an appalling view of the dulness of Boodels' place in the winter, that even the fish should commit suicide, and drown themselves in sheer desperation. Boodels thinks they must have been poisoned. But, I ask, who would poison a fish ? Who could have a grudge against the fish ? Perhaps, I observe, in order to take a cheerful view of matters and enliven Boodels, perhaps the fish wanted thinning : too many fish spoil the pond. Can't he consult some fish-doctor ? I suppose there *is* such a person for dealing with diseases in fish, just as there is a Veterinary and a Cow-Doctor. What is the professional name for a fish-doctor ? A Piscinary ?

The Troubles of Boodels.—He can't get the pets to answer to their names. There's a Peruvian goose—I think it is a Peruvian goose—waddling about that ought to answer to the name of *Doddles*. But whenever *Doddles* is called, a little toy-terrier, with

bells round its neck, rushes up barking. The terrier's name is *Squig*, but he prefers being *Doddles*. The Peruvian goose rejects both *Squig* and *Doddles* as inappropriate, and has elected to answer only to *Tittikins*, which appellation belongs by right to a stealthy white cat with a very pink nose.

All this is a source of deep annoyance to Boodels, who prides himself on his extraordinary influence over animals. Whenever *Squig* appears, *Doddles* utters a sound between a grunt and a quack, and waddles off, shaking his tail with an air of grave dissatisfaction.

The Peruvian goose is a remarkable bird. His natural peculiarity is a bright scarlet carbuncular excrescence over the beak, just as if he had been in the habit of taking more port wine than was good for him. I congratulate Boodels on the specimen, when I discover that this goose is another of Boodels' troubles. He ought, it appears, to eat the slugs, but he prefers the strawberries. This, perhaps, accounts for what I had set down to port wine. Then, another thing, this goose will not join the ducks on the "big pond," but will (with another goose whom he has induced to join him) insist on bathing in the small pond exclusively devoted to gold fish.

From time to time Boodels, and the Gardeners, drive him away—everyone drives him away from the pond; but crafty goose watches his opportunity, generally squatting by a tree within easy walking distance of the pond, and pretending, artfully, to be fast asleep; then, when no one is near, he summons the other goose (of a very weak character, and easily led), and they both waddle down to the gold-fish pond, and are into it, with a flop, before anyone can get at them. *Squig*, the nervous black and tan terrier with the fool's bells round his neck, generally gives the alarm on these occasions by rushing to the edge of the pond, making vigorous feints of jumping in at the geese, for which they don't care a straw, being far too old birds to be taken in by this sort of chaff, and barking with all his might and main until someone arrives to see what on earth is the matter, when he assists in chiveying the Peruvian goose, who sometimes, forgetting his figure and his dignity, takes, literally, to flight. His flying is a very awkward performance, his movements being as unsteady and as

noisy as those of the "property" dove in *Lohengrin*. However, he doesn't go far—about twenty yards—just enough to astonish the terrier, to whom this sudden levitation of a heavy body evidently savours of the supernatural. *Squig* turns tail, and retires into the house, shaking his head with a puzzled air, as though there were something wrong somewhere.

I admire the pond: the smaller one, where the gold-fish disport themselves. No, it won't do; nothing is satisfactory.

"Why," says Boodels, pointing to a something sticking up in the centre of the pond, that looks as if an umbrella had taken a header into the water, had stuck in the mud handle downwards, and left only its ferule visible above the surface. "Look there!—*that* is a fountain. I mean," he explains; and the explanation is necessary, "*it ought to be*. That fountain won't work."

I suggest that he means "won't play," which, he replies, is the same thing. It may be the same thing to a fountain, but not to me.

Another great trouble of Boodel's is a duck that *won't* sit on eleven eggs. The Gardener is of opinion that *Squig*, the terrier with the bells, "harries" her, and drives her away. *Squig* comes up, gambolling, at this very moment, when we are standing by the bush, where the eggs are, and assumes an air of total indifference to the subject, as much as to imply,

"I really don't know what you are talking about. I wouldn't hunt or harry a poor duck, or prevent her sitting! Absurd!"

"She must be made to sit," says Boodels, angrily, to the Under-Gardener, who thereupon appears hurt.

Proverb for the Occasion.—"The duck that *can* sit, and won't sit, must be made to sit."

"At all events," I say, "your bees are all right."

Are they? That's all I know about it! Why the bees have been emulating the example of the fish, and absolutely drowning themselves in a small pan of water. Boodels thinks they must be mad, and advises me not to go too near the hives.

And yet I thought a purely country life must be so unruffled!

But Boodels hasn't yet told me half his troubles.

"How are your orchids getting on?" I inquire.

"Orchids!" he exclaims. "Don't mention them!"

"Why, what's the matter?" I ask.

"Matter!" he returns. "We've got the Mealy Bug in the house—in fact, it's infested with the Mealy Bug."

The Mealy Bug! What a nasty, creepy sort of name! What an unpleasant thought, too, that, as the orchid-house is quite close to *the* house, the Mealy Bugs may, when tired of the orchids, walk in and . . . ugh!

I think I shall go back to town. Have a telegram as Milburd did, and be obliged to return.

Luncheon gong. The Poet and Composer are at table, punctually, with tremendous appetites.

Yes, but they haven't yet heard of the proximity of the Mealy Bug!

I wish I were more of a naturalist and knew the habits of the Mealy Bug. Is he called "*Mealy*" because he eats so much? If so, how many meals a day? Does he live on vegetables as well as orchids? Is the Mealy Bug so tenacious of life as to survive the boiling of a vegetable? Could he hide in the corner of a cabbage and so be served up? Or could he, like *Ariel*, "lurk" in the heart of a lettuce and be mixed up in salad?

Oh the Mealy Bug! There's something so undefinably *sneaking* about the name. It's not grand and bold like the Colorado Beetle. There is a military dash in the sound of Colorado Beetle which is bombastically operative. Were a tall, stout, fierce-looking, middle-aged Gentleman in a crimson and gold uniform and a cocked hat pointed out to you as "the Colorado Beetle," you would be inclined to believe it. "Colorado" is a magnificent word for music. There is a ring of El Dorado about it. You can imagine an epic describing the fight of some hero of romance with the Colorado. St. George and the Colorado Beetle!! Why, it might even be a battle-cry! It looks grand—it sounds grand! But St. George and the Mealy Bug! No—ugh!

Hang it, I wish Boodels had kept the Mealy Bug to himself.

"No salad, thank you."

CHAPTER III.

OUR EXCITEMENTS AND AMUSEMENTS AT BOODELS'—THE TRIMMER—
THE WALK WANTED—THE COMPOSER'S LECTURE—LIMITS TO
EXERCISE—CALM CONTEMPLATION.



THE Poet Hamlin Mumley, Pogmore the Composer, and Milburd, have set the Trimmer to catch the Eel in the Pond.

This is, at present, our chief excitement. We go to bed at night, early, wondering if there'll be anything on the Trimmer in the morning. We get up early, and go down to the Pond to see if anything *is* on the Trimmer. No, the Trimmer has not been touched during the night. Every hour, somebody, generally two of us, go up to the Pond, and look with increasing curiosity at the Trimmer. Our first impulse is to take it up. Our second is to let it be there a little longer, and give it a chance. We begin to speak of it as something with a character to redeem.

Boodels explains to us that it is no use taking it up, as when anything *has* been caught, the Trimmer turns up of its own

accord in the water, and floats topsy-turvy.

Throughout the day we walk at intervals up to the Pond, and stand on the bank silently watching the Trimmer, as if a friend had been drowned in the Pond, and this were the tombstone over his watery grave.

The Trimmer *does* not turn up. But we go on, expecting this to take place. In fact we are like four *Micawbers* "waiting perpetually for something" (the Trimmer) "to turn up." Milburd is always wanting to "rout it out with a pole," and is invariably restrained by the Poet or by Boodels. The Composer thinks that a "musical situation" might be got out of it "somehow," and suggests as an idea *The Troll of a Trimmer*. Milburd instantly says, alluding to the Composer's Oratorio, "There were no Trimmers in the Ark! ha! ha! ha! Unless they had to 'trim the boat!' ha! ha! ha!" But nobody laughs, as it is felt that Milburd is a fool for rushing in where angels (ourselves) dare not tread.

As the day wears on—it is a very hot day, and I fancy there *is* a smell from the Pond (which suspicion Boodels resents as a libel on his place, "because," he says, "if there *is* a smell, it's anything but an unwholesome one"—but Boodels won't allow there can be anything unhealthy about his place—that's his one strong point)—the excitement of visiting the Trimmer begins to pall upon me. I want to walk out somewhere—to a hill if possible, if there *is* such a thing in the neighbourhood—"Lots!" replies Boodels, indignantly), and get some fresh air. This desire for fresh air also annoys Boodels. It is a slight on *his* air. He becomes sarcastic, and pretends to apologise for his place not being by the seaside. *He* doesn't perceive any smell from the Pond. *He* doesn't complain of the atmosphere. *He*, in fact, finds it very pleasant.

But then Boodels has the place on a lease for some considerable time, and, of course, he is not going to depreciate the Pond by (as it were, to put it proverbially and vulgarly) "crying stinking fish," not even if the Trimmer should have already caught the Eel without having turned up, and the Eel were being boiled in its native sun-heated water.

Boodels does *not* want a walk, and *he* won't come. He says, "When you come back I'll walk up to the Pond with you and see how the Trimmer's getting on." Bother the Trimmer! Will the Composer, Pogmore, accompany me? I find he is in the drawing-room at the piano, accompanying himself. I happen to look in at a moment when he has got into some difficulty with an E flat

which oughtn't, by rights, to be in a chord in his composition, but which has got in somehow, and produced such a marvellous effect that he has begun to think of writing a treatise on the "Unexpected seventh" and revolutionising music generally.

"Walk!" he cries out impetuously, appearing as violently horrified as though I'd asked him to come and commit a murder in the lane. "Walk! my dear fellow!" (the tone in which he says "My dear fellow!" implies "You confounded idiot, to come in and interrupt a Composer!") "I can't walk *now*. Any other time I'll be delighted; but—I really can't now!" And he bends, inquiringly, over the forefinger of his right hand, which he has not yet removed from the astonishing E flat.

It perhaps flashes across him, that, considering me as his probable librettist, he may have treated me rather cavalierly in shouting at me as he has just done (for he *has* shouted, and no one likes to be shouted at), and so he turns to me while sitting and stooping over the key-board, as if he were either the tuner, or a naturalist in search of an insect that had slipped out of one of the cracks between the notes—(by the way, why shouldn't a Composer who writes all his airs in C major—as I should if I were a Composer—be called a "Naturalist," and another who might confine himself to D a "Two Sharpist," and another, who might stick invariably to F Major, a "One-Flattist"? But though I interrupt the Composer with the question, he simply replies, "It couldn't be done")—and says more politely, "I can't come now, because I've hit upon something which may turn out of the utmost importance. I think," he says, "I can resolve the D into the dominant without a recurring seventh"—or words to this effect. "If I can do this" (whatever it is), "it will be," he exclaims, "a most invaluable discovery."

Pogmore, it strikes me, is treating Music as if it were Astronomy. This is a new light to me, and I am always, not only ready to learn *anything*, but interested in acquiring knowledge from experts.

"But," I say to him, "you can't discover notes as you can stars."

"Of course, you can," he replies.

I am inclined to ask him if, instead of a telescope, he uses a stethoscope with which doctors take soundings, but I feel that

Pogmore is not in the vein for this remark, so I only beg him to continue his instruction.

"Well," he says, still with his finger on the E flat, as though the loss of this note involved ruin, "well, in music you know, there are millions of sounds which cannot be represented on the piano. There wouldn't, you see, be room for such an instrument in any house, and it would take several hands to play it at once. Now the ambition of every Composer is not merely to produce a composition for *an* instrument where he is limited to thirteen notes more or less defective, but to evolve new sounds and fresh permutations and combinations of sound from the illimitable system of Harmony existing in nature."

Dear me! What an Oratorio the Ark will be! I must try and think of a libretto for Pogmore.

"But," I mildly insinuate, "you can do all you want with a piano."

Pogmore scorns the idea. "My dear fellow,"—by the way, he might just as well be out walking and talking, as lecturing me in a room with the thermometer at something terrific—"My dear fellow, the piano is a most defective instrument. For instance, do you think for a moment that all the sounds of which Music is capable are exhausted in an octave? You," this to me, as an *argumentum ad hominem*, "can make more sounds than those." Certainly I can. "You can sing notes that are not on the piano?" Can I? well yes—perhaps I can.

"Then," I say, struck by a new idea, "if one had never heard a piano so as to be restricted by its limited capabilities," this is the view I begin to take of pianos in general, "then every man would have invented an instrument for himself, reproducing the sounds peculiar to himself, and by unity of these instruments we should, long before this, have obtained one grand harmonicon, so to speak."

"Well," says Pogmore, rather taken aback by my sudden grasp of the idea, "the question would be where could such an instrument be placed, for the scientific Philosophy of Music teaches us, that, in all probability, musical sounds are commensurable with space."

Dear me! But why won't he come out for a walk? If I could only keep him interested, perhaps he will, because I can suggest

that *he* can talk as we walk along. I'm afraid I can't hook him yet; an attempt to pull him out would only result in his breaking away with the hook in his jaw. But I encourage him, on the chance of getting a companion.

"For example. You understand," he continues, "that there *must* be some sounds between C and D?"

"Yes—I do." (Would this be a good point for suggesting the walk?)

"The first sound that occurs to you is half C and D—that is C sharp."

Precisely; but we're rather wasting time, because he might be saying all this to me on the top of the hill that I want to go and see.

Without showing any signs of stirring, Pogmore continues:—"Now where is the quarter of C, or the eighth of C, or the sixteenth, or the hundredth? Where are any of those fractional infinitesimal sounds which must exist as parts of a whole?"

"Quite so—where are they?" I say, and I twiddle my straw hat as a hint.

Pogmore is wound up. He is giving me the result of recent scientific training, and I believe is practising on *me* for his own benefit.

"Again," he says, "this one black note, that represents at the same time both C sharp and D flat, must be a very imperfect invention. It is impossible that C sharp and D flat *can* be the same sounds."

"Quite," I say; then I add, as persuasively as I can, "You'd be all the better for a little exercise, and come back quite fresh to work."

No. He won't move. He simply says, "Don't stop for me," and turns once more to the piano. "I say," he calls out as I am quitting the room, "you might turn over the *libretto* while you're out walking. And when you come back I don't mind walking with you as far as the Pond to see how the Trimmer's getting on."

Hang the Trimmer! Where's the Poet, Hamlin Mumley; perhaps he'll come. There he is in the middle of the lawn, not far from the Pond. He and the Peruvian Goose together, facing one another at a distance of about six feet, and con-

templating each other in a drowsy stupid fashion, as if they were both waiting for an inspiration. On coming up towards them, I notice that while the Poet is regarding the Goose with interest, as though he were mentally commencing a poem, beginning with, "O, strange Peruvian Goose, whose —, &c." The Goose, on the other hand, is apparently fast asleep. The Poet has mesmerised the Goose, and as Mumley seems to be unable to remove his eyes off the bird, the Goose has mesmerised the Poet.

Happy Thought.—The Pond has already suggested *The Butler and the Eel* as a ballad. Now the next is *The Poet and the Peruvian Goose*.—The collection of poems to be called *The Boodels Ballads*.

I rouse Mumley from his lethargy. The Goose opens his eyes and wobbles his tail. Will the Poet come out for a walk? There is, I tell him by way of inducement, a beautiful view from the top of some hill near here. No. He thanks me; he will another day, but just now he is rather anxious about the Trimmer. Why not come down as far as the Pond (that is, about ten yards), and look at the Trimmer? *That*, he adds, "will be exercise." Milburd comes in through a gate, flushed and hot. "I'll go with you. Where?" he shouts.

"Ah, it's too late now," I say evasively. "I only wanted a little exercise."

"If you want exercise, old boy," he shouts, though I'm quite close to him, "you go into the field there where the cow is. Ha! ha! ha! She's as mad as a hatter, and she'll give you some exercise. Ha! ha! ha! I should like to see you cutting round the field, with the old cow after you! Ha! ha! ha!"

Milburd Junior's jokes are most offensive; and he is always seeking fun in what might result in some most serious, if not absolutely fatal, accident. Suppose I *did* go into the field, supposing the cow were to run at me, and I couldn't get away quickly enough, would Milburd ever forgive himself, for, as it were, having dared me to the encounter?

"I wonder," cries Milburd, "how the Trimmer's getting on." And off go Mumley and Milburd to the pond. Where can I go for exercise? To the Trimmer? No, I will *not* go to the

Trimmer. Then where? This opens my eyes to the fact that the boundaries for exercise within the Boodels' domain are limited. For example, when you want to walk in the Kitchen Garden, you are strongly advised not to, on account of the bees. This is enforced by Boodels with a story of how the bees (not *his*, but *some* bees of his acquaintance) once swarmed on a man in a garden. The man was standing still (just as the Poet does when he thinks he has an idea), and one bee came on to his nose. The man, having considerable presence of mind, didn't attempt to brush it off, as he knew that he would be stung. The bee remained on the tip of his nose. To this bee came another, and clung on to the first bee; then came a third, and clung on to bee number two: then came a fourth, and so on, until gradually, within an hour, nearly a thousand bees had swarmed and were hanging, in a bunch, from his nose. He dared not stir; he couldn't speak; he couldn't be fed; no one could venture to come near him until the bees had finished swarming, and they often take a couple of days to finish swarming. Fortunately for him, these bees got it over in about three hours' time, when the Gardener came with a hive, and took the swarm. The man never stood still in a garden again as long as he lived.

(*Boodels' Anecdotes of Country Life*, a companion to *The Boodels Ballads*. Clearly a valuable compilation. Shall ask Boodels if he has any objection to my compiling such a book. Most interesting, and would destroy many popular fallacies as to the unalloyed enjoyment of the country.)

So the Kitchen Garden is tabooed. Well, why not the Meadow? Why not? because of the cow. She is so uncertain. She chivied the Butler the other day, and he only narrowly escaped by jumping into the ditch. But what was the Butler doing there? I ask. "Oh! he had gone out to catch the pony," Boodels replies, as if catching the pony was a Butler's ordinary routine business.

Well, how about the Paddock? A walk about there, eh? The pony is in the paddock, and he is good tempered enough with the Butler, but he is inclined to be vicious with strangers,—unless they've got bread to give him. This bars the paddock.

The Farm-yard, then? Oh, you can't walk *there*, it is so mucky. "But," says Boodels, "if you want to get exercise and

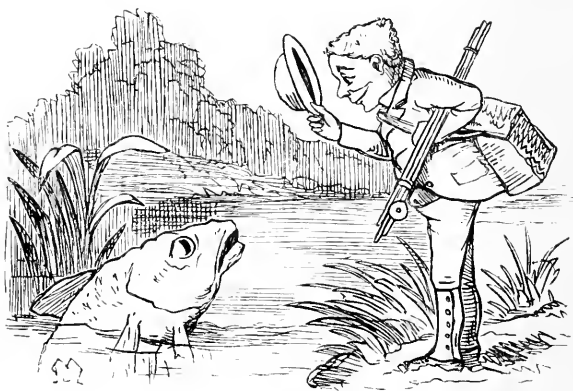
do some good, you might take a stick and beat about for rats, they swarm by the pigstyes as big as rabbits, and you stand a fair chance of killing some." Declined, with thanks.

There is only one other place left; the Stable-yard. "Ah," says Boodels, "you'd better look through the gate first, and see if Gripper is chained up. Sometimes he is loose." Gripper is the bull-dog, with a fixed idea of everyone, except the Butler, the Postman, and the Baker, being burglars.

Then there is nothing to do unless I take a walk alone. I am dissatisfied. Boodels rises from the chair in the tent. He has a remedy for all ills, an excitement that never fails. It is this:—

"Come," he says, "I don't mind walking with you as far as the Pond, to see what the Trimmer's doing."

And then for the fourteenth time we all four stand again on the bank, silently regarding the Trimmer. The four *Micawbers* waiting for the something to turn up. As we began the day so we end it . . . And this is life in the country! Dinner time.



CHAPTER IV.

MORE ABOUT THE TRIMMER—HYPOTHESIS—LEGENDARY—SIGNS OF A
ROW—DISCUSSION—FRESH ARRIVAL—THE BUDDERMERS.



DECIDEDLY, we have been gradually getting into late hours. Our sittings at night have been imperceptibly prolonged like those of Parliament. The amendments have been generally in the form of, "Oh, just one more pipe," or, "Just half a pipe before we *all* go," and then some fresh subject of conversation has turned up, though this less rarely happens than the revivification, at

midnight, of a topic supposed to have been exhausted three hours ago. The time of rising has become uncertain, and the Butler is bothered. We had commenced life in the country meaning to go in for health—"Early to bed and early to rise." We had set the Trimmer overnight, and had been down to the Pond betimes to see what the Trimmer had been up to during the silent hours. The Trimmer—it was set three days ago—has not as yet distinguished itself. It has not turned up; and we, the Poet, the Composer, Milburd, and myself, are still in the character of the four *Micawbers*—but we are now the four languid *Micawbers*,

awaiting the turning of the Trimmer. (*Happy Thought.—The Turning of the Trimmer*, a political novel.)

Boodels strolls down and looks at us indolently. He has seen his visitors doing exactly the same thing before; his visitors, indeed, having never had much else to do. The history of his visitors repeats itself. *He* knows exactly what chance there is of our fishing agent, the Trimmer, doing anything either for us, its employers, or on its own account.

Speaking of the Trimmer as our “fishing agent” leads me to consider what was the origin of the Trimmer, and, indeed, what was the origin of fishing.

It strikes me that the inventor of the Trimmer must have been some Gentleman in post-diluvian times—when the fish had got settled again, and business was being carried on as before the alterations—who was fond of bathing in his own Pond. This Post diluvian Person was of a rude, uncultivated, savage nature, and of revengeful instincts. He was bathing, and the Eel, then less crafty and wriggling than he has since come to be by experience, seeing something that looked eatable, seized hold of his great toe. With a sudden yell the bather gave a tremendous leap, turned head over heels in the water, and the Eel, after clinging on as long as it could, was kicked off on to the bank. The Gentleman, having righted himself, discovered his enemy, went at it viciously, but finding that he was unable to grasp the creature securely, he seized it with his teeth, and, being hungry, ate part of it, liked it, wondered how it tasted boiled, tried the rest boiled, liked it still better, and finally wanted more. But how to obtain it? Clearly, he must bathe again, and incur the pain of the toe-bite. (Had it been possible for this Person to have been subsequently converted to Christianity, he might have written a discourse on the Book of Toe-bite, and been made Bishop of *Eely*.) But though the Eel was to his taste, the pain wasn't; so he hired a boy; or, if in easy circumstances, compelled a Slave. The Slave remained in the Pond, and caught Eels, or rather the Eels caught him.

After a time the Eels would be exhausted, and so would the Slaves. Then one Slave, cleverer than the rest, made a sham foot and toe to save his own, and the Eels were caught as before.

From this to tying the sham toe on to something, and putting it in from the bank, was a small jump, and thence to the Trimmer, the hook, and worm, nothing but a step. Of course the apparatus was not called Trimmer at first. Being a neat invention, it was called Trim; but the Person who improved on it called *his* the Trimmer. (*Happy Thought*.—Another contribution to *The Boodels Ballads*, “*The Toe and Eel*.”)

Midday.—Fourth day at Boodels’. All by the Pond. Milburd says this sounds like a parallel Cockneyism to “’*All by the Sea*.” His joke is received in silence; but *he* roars, and then explains it to *us*.

“Oh! yes,” replies the Poet, testily, “*we* saw it. We’re not idiots!” (Milburd and Hamlin Mumley the Poet don’t hit it off exactly.)

“Talking of idiots,” says Milburd, “were you ever in Hanwell?” Mumley frowns. Milburd continues, after laughing boisterously, “I don’t mean as a patient; but did you ever go over the Asylum?”

No, the Poet growls, he never did.

“I did,” says Milburd, “the other day.”

“Wonder they let you out,” growls Mumley.

“Ha! ha! ha! that’s *your* experience, eh?” retorts Milburd. We all feel that unless something turns up—either the Trimmer or a new topic—we are on the brink of a row. Milburd winks at us and laughs. We do not encourage him. We all silently watch the Trimmer, as if it were an experiment in torpedoes. But Milburd doesn’t know when to stop. He resumes seriously, “I say, Mumley, though—joking apart,” this conciliates Mumley, who thinks he is now appealed to as some one of above the average intellect, “you *would* be interested in the literature the patients are allowed to read.”

“No doubt,” says Hamlin, gravely. “It must be, indeed, difficult to select works which shall suit these poor half-brained beings.”

“Yes,” returns Milburd, in the same serious tone, “the Librarian told me that the selection has been most troublesome—in fact, almost impossible until last year.”

"Ah," says Hamlin Mumley, interesting himself, as we all do, being glad to find that Milburd *can* talk rationally when he likes, "then last year were the patients of a different mental calibre?"

"Yes, they were very much below the usual standard."

"Indeed! poor creatures!" sighs Hamlin Mumley, compassionately. "And did they ask for any particular books?"

"Yes," replies Milburd, quickly, "they all insisted on having Hamlin Mumley's New Book of Poems! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"You idiot!" says Pogmore the Composer, smiling however. He owes Mumley one for having said that "good poetry was thrown away on music." The Composer feels that, to put it musically, through the instrumentality of Milburd, he has "scored."

I laugh, because Hamlin Mumley is confoundedly conceited about his *one* book of poems.

Boodels, as host, takes it all seriously, and does not smile. He expresses his opinion that "he really does not see anything very funny in it; and for his part he (Boodels), were he Hamlin Mumley, would feel most gratified at having been able to relieve the monotony of the Lunatics' life." "I think," he adds, as if his opinion were a judicial summing-up for the defendant, "*I* should think, if I were Mumley, that a greater compliment couldn't be paid to my work."

"Hum!" growls Mumley, more hurt by this well-intentioned remark of Boodels' than even by Milburd's chaff. "Upon my life I don't see *that*."

"I do," returns Boodels, shortly.

"Do you mean to say I ought to be highly gratified if only Lunatics read my books?" asks the Poet, warmly.

"If it alleviates their sufferings," replies Boodels, "of course you should be."

"But," remonstrates the Poet, "I don't write merely to alleviate sufferings. My object is to elevate the mind."

"Well," retorts Boodels, "then you can't begin with a better set of readers than Idiots."

If ever a storm was imminent, it is *now*, by the Pond, with the Trimmer cynically at rest. Milburd has retired, temporarily, from the contest, but is delighted, winking at Pogmore (who himself

intends to dash in presently when he sees an opportunity for bringing in music), nudging me, and emitting subdued chuckling sounds. Mumley is ruffling his feathers previous to making a crushing reply, when I am struck by a *Happy Thought*, of which I deliver myself at once: "Mumley needn't be annoyed at being popular with Lunatics. 'Great wits to madness nearly are allied.'"

For one second I see that Hamlin Mumley is uncertain whether to take this as a genuine tribute to the greatness of his wit, or as a satirical compliment. Have I alluded to him as a madman at large, or as a great unfettered Poet? He, sensibly, decides for the latter; and, as the Parliamentary reports have it, "The subject then dropped." (By the way, what a complimentary descriptive title for a Poet would be, "The Great Unfettered!" *Mem.* Try it on some one.)

"Now," cries Milburd, "let's take up the Trimmer." Agreed to *nem. con.*, as a distraction.

When taken up, there is nothing on it,—not even the bait.

"There!" says Boodels, triumphantly, "I *said* there were eels in the Pond!" He is as pleased as if they'd been caught: more so, in fact, as there is still a future in the Pond for his guests, who, if they had been successful in catching the Eels, would soon be tired of their only amusement.

"But," I object, to Boodels, "*you* said that if anything were caught, the Trimmer would turn up. It didn't."

"Yes, it did," he replies, "*in the night*. The Eel swallowed the bait, and went off. It must have been a very big Eel. I'm sure there *is* a *very* big Eel in this Pond."

The Butler announces a Mr. and Mrs. Buddermer. We knew they were coming, and had discussed them.

Fresh arrivals in a country house, if strangers to the guests in possession, are regarded by the latter as intruders.

We have all been on the very verge of a violent row among ourselves; we now unite (that is, without expressing ourselves openly to one another we have this co-operative store of sympathy) as against a common foe.

Boodels has exclaimed, "Oh, I'm *so* glad!" and has hurried off to welcome his guests.

None of us like our host's appearing "so glad," and saying so before *us*, and then rushing off. It implies that he has had enough of *us*. We remain, sulkily, by the Pond.

"Who *are* these Buddermers?" asks Pogmore the composer.

We all simultaneously shrug our shoulders to show our ignorance of the Buddermers, and our social superiority to everybody outside Boodels generally.

"I suppose," grumbles Milburd, who has found another worm, and is making a horrid mess of it with the Trimmer's line and hook, "I suppose we shall have to dress for dinner."

"I shan't," says the Poet, determinedly. He professes to despise conventionalities.

"If you don't I won't," says Milburd.

"I shall," says Pogmore. "I always do." Pogmore has some vague sort of notion that he raises the character of the musical profession by being dressed for dinner. Milburd shouts,

"I say, why will Pogmore be like a hot roast joint? Eh? Because he'll be 'dressed for dinner.' Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Then he shouts again, "Do you see, eh? '*Dressed.*' You know. Eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

But *we* do not encourage him.

"I'll do what everybody else does," is my genial motto.

Secretly, as there is to be a lady present, I decide on siding with Pogmore.

"I wish he wouldn't have company till we have 'gone," says the Poet. "It's so much pleasanter being all by ourselves here."

I agree with him, of course. But as we have been on the very verge of a row every evening except the first, and as we should have reached the culminating point to-night (after this narrow escape just now) I am not sorry that we have the respite of the Buddermers. Besides, I point out to Pogmore, *à propos* of a *libretto* for the Oratorio of *The Ark*, we're now going to have just what you want in your subject—a little female interest. There is a Mrs. Buddermer and a Miss Buddermer.

Pogmore becomes interested in Miss Buddermer. He goes so far as to "wonder what she's like."

The Poet briefly observes, "I hate young girls."

We are silent. We march in to the sound of the gong for dinner.

"By Jove!" shouts Milburd, rushing up to us. We all stop and turn, under the impression that the Trimmer has done something at last. He seizes Pogmore's arm. "There's an idea for your Oratorio. Gong sounds! March of all the animals two and two into dinner! Ha! ha! ha! Eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

He nudges me roughly with his left elbow, takes Pogmore by the arm with a jerk that makes him cannon against the Poet, and then walks his victim off like a prisoner, still roaring in his ear, "All the animals—ha! ha! ha!—into dinner—ha! ha! ha! First-rate notion, eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

"I *hear*," groans Pogmore, faintly, vainly trying to extricate himself. But he can't. Milburd has got him, and shaking him and shouting at the unfortunate Composer of the future Oratorio, he literally pushes and hoists him up-stairs.



CHAPTER V.

THE NEW ARRIVALS — OPINIONS — THE LADIES — ETIQUETTE — RE-ARRANGEMENTS — BOODELS' INFORMATION — CHATTING — A THOROUGH BORE — THE BALD ONE.



BOODELS' great merit is his superlative valuation of his friends. The more recent his acquaintance with them, the more brilliant they are in his eyes—like new furniture or patent leather boots just sent home.

When Boodels makes new friends, he likes them to be sent to his home *at once*, just as he does with new purchases. Consequently, the Buddemers, whom

he first met quite recently at Scarborough, have already arrived, and we have been prepared, by Boodels' enthusiastic description, to see something exceptionally brilliant. Mrs. Buddermer—Boodels always speaks of the lady first, giving you to understand that *she* has generally been the attraction—"Mrs. Buddermer," he says, "is simply the handsomest woman he has ever met. She is so charming, so unaffected, and the dresses are the most expensive things you ever saw, and her taste exquisite!" Mr. Buddermer (he is not always so enthusiastic, we notice, about the husband) is a *very* clever man. He is connected, says Boodels,

with several scientific societies, and there's hardly a subject on which he is not thoroughly well informed. "He writes, I believe," Boodels adds, "for the *Saturday Review* and *The Quarterly*."

"So do I," cries Milburd, winking at me.

"You!" retorts Boodels, contemptuously.

"Yes I do," Milburn returns. "I write for the *Saturday Review*—to the office, whenever I want it, inclosing sixpence-half-penny, and they always send it. Ha! ha! ha! Eh?" Then turning to me, and alluding to Boodels, "He thought I wrote articles for the paper. Ha! ha! ha!"

"And Miss Buddermer?" I ask, anxious to return to the subject and nip Milburd's fun in the bud.

"She is his daughter by a first marriage," Boodels answers. "One of the cleverest and most amusing girls I ever met. There isn't a novel she doesn't read."

"Pretty?" is the natural reply from his audience.

"She's very pretty. In fact," he goes on, feeling that he has not said half enough about her, "she is, simply, the prettiest girl I've ever seen, I think. And she's an heiress with about fifty thousand pounds of her own. She dresses magnificently. Such diamonds! But so has Mrs. Buddermer: they're literally smothered in diamonds."

"What's old Buddermer, then?" asks Milburd, who affects to be no respecter of persons. "A money-lender? Eh! Ha! ha! ha! He's old Shifty-per-Shent. Ha! ha! ha!"

Boodels is thoroughly annoyed with Milburd.

"They are *my* guests," says Boodels, sniffing indignantly; "and, if they're not good enough for *you*, you can go."

"All right, old boy!" returns Milburd with the utmost good-humour. "I don't mean anything, you know. I'll get Old Buddermer to lend me a few thousands, and then marry his daughter in order to pay him back. Ha! ha! ha!"

Milburd has been asked here expressly because "there never was such a fellow for a country-house as Milburd for keeping everyone in such good spirits," and not a day—not an evening—has passed, without everyone being on the verge of a row with some one (generally with Boodels himself,) in consequence of Milburd. Milburd has a most good-humoured and pleasant knack

of setting everyone by the ears, and then retiring, as it were, from the field of battle, occasionally returning, conversationally, to see how the fight's going on, and just joining in, siding first with one side then with another, just to keep the game alive. As for himself, he only says the rudest things in the heartiest manner; and as he hasn't an idea of what delicate consideration means, nobody likes to attempt a repartee with him, because he is sure to reply with something personal and peculiarly objectionable. Again, you can't do much, in the cutting retort line, against a strong young man, whose never-failing repartee is a whack on your back with his big open palm, and a shout of "Hallo! old boy!" in your ear, as though he were calling to you a mile off; and don't you wish he were? He always has "a gallery" with the servants. Milburd at dinner poses for *them*, and is stronger in broad farce (in "clowning," the Poet Mumley calls it) than in comedy.

This evening the presence of the new arrivals causes an alteration in the table arrangement. Hamlin Mumley the Poet, who has been, till now in the Vice-Chair, is deposed to make room for Mr. Buddermer; "because," says Boodels (who has his own views of the strictest etiquette) "he is the older man, and you can't put a bachelor at the bottom of the table when there's a married man present."

Somehow we, of the previous established party, are inclined to resent this. We are all older friends of Boodels than this Mr. Buddermer, whom he only met last year at Scarborough. "A Jew money-lender, or a swindler, for anything Boodels knows about him," insists Milburd.

Boodels takes an opportunity of informing us, pointedly before Milburd, that the Buddermers live in the best society; that they are out every night during the season, except when they are giving most splendid parties at their own house; that they have the most beautiful equipage in London; that they go to the Prince of Wales's garden-parties; that there isn't a State Ball to which they are not invited; that privately, without anyone knowing much about it, she (Mrs. Buddermer) visits the Queen at Buckingham Palace, "and is" (Boodels informs us the more emphatically because he detects Milburd winking) "*constantly* at Windsor; not, of course, when anyone's there, but as a private friend.

But," Boodels adds, as though he were afraid of having committed some breach of confidence about his Scarborough acquaintances, "don't talk of it before *them*."

"No, I should think it would be a sore subject," says Milburd, giving me a painfully sharp nudge. But Boodels pays no attention to his remark.

We are all of us oppressed by this greatness being thrust upon us. For my part, when I am dressing for dinner on the first evening of their arrival, I feel inclined to go to bed, and leave the Buddermers to Boodels.

Pogmore, Mumley, and Milburd are all more or less sulky about it, and agree that the charm of the place will be thoroughly destroyed by this incursion.

Consequently, we are all late for dinner except Milburd, who, after abusing Mr. Buddermer as a money-lender, and the whole party as, probably, "swindlers" who have gammoned Boodels at Scarborough, has dressed rapidly, has been down in the drawing-room a full quarter of an hour before anybody else, has thoroughly ingratiated himself with the new arrivals, and has conciliated Boodels to such an extent, that I overhear our host in the recess in conversation with Mrs. Buddermer, informing her that his old friend Milburd is the cleverest, wittiest man he has ever met, that he'll keep you in a roar of laughter, that he is the life and soul of every Country House. "And," he adds, in order to increase his present house value, "he is a most difficult man to get hold of, he's always engaged."

"I think," I hear Mrs. Buddermer observe to Boodels, "I remember meeting him at Brikfield, the Duke of Strawborough's place, two years ago."

"Very likely," says Boodels, carelessly. Had Milburd himself told him of his having been in such aristocratic society, Boodels wouldn't have believed him, but, taking it on Mrs. Buddermer's authority, it assumes the greatest importance as a fact, and Milburd's value has gone up immensely in the market. In future, Boodels' account of Milburd will be, "Don't you know him? Oh! he's a very old friend of mine. He's the wittiest, cleverest fellow you ever met. It's most difficult to get him to come and stay a

few days, as he's always with the Prince, or at the Duke of Strawberry's place, or with some of our greatest swells."

Mrs. Buddermer is a rather tall, elegant lady. There seems to be a great deal of velvet and glitter about her, also lace. She is the first person you see on entering the room, and the first person who sees you. You recognise her voice as Mrs. Buddermer's, though you've never heard it before. She is still a handsome woman. Her eyes invite you to come up and talk as an intimate friend at once. Mumley is caught. The Composer is caught. I am caught. We are all caught in order, hooked, landed. She is the Trimmer—very much the Trimmer—and we are the Eels. Hamlin Mumley, who came in like a sulky lion, is going on like a silly lamb.

Pogmore the Composer, who assumed indifference (everyone comes into the drawing-room in his own peculiar manner, both before and after dinner), is now standing by Miss Buddermer, pointing out the beauties of the garden. I want to take my turn with Mrs. Buddermer, but Milburd is with her, and if I go up now, he is sure to say something unpleasant, personal, about myself. He has no tact. Boodels, however, introduces me, and leaves me. Mrs. Buddermer acknowledges my presence, but resumes her conversation as if I were a parenthesis in the middle of a sentence. Milburd ignores me. I feel inclined to walk away, but then I am sure they would laugh at me behind my back. What they are talking about, I haven't the slightest idea. Boodels should have chosen another moment for introduction.

"I don't think he was always like that," she observes to Milburd, taking up the thread of their previous conversation which I had interrupted.

"Yes," replies Milburd, "after her escapade. You see it was a very unpleasant affair." They don't even throw me a hint to catch hold of. It's very awkward to feel "out of it," but I do.

"Of course. But it was her fault making it so public."

"Partly. How did you like the ponies?"

"The creams? Oh, they were very pretty, but they were so slow, and she used really to flog them unmercifully."

"She used. You know what they used to say in the Park? No? Didn't you hear? They used to call them the Whipped Creams."

"The whipped creams!" repeats Mrs. Buddermer. "Oh, that's very good." Then she laughs. She has beautiful teeth. But while she laughs at Milburd's wretched nonsense, she's only pretending to laugh, I'm sure—she looks at me as much as to say, "*Do talk, do join and relieve me, I'm sure I'd much rather talk to you than him, and if you begin perhaps he'll go.*"

As the Poet and the Composer, early next day, express a very favourable opinion of Mrs. Buddermer, I wonder if they felt this *attrait* as well as myself.

"Mr. Boodels has no Lawn Tennis ground here, has he?" she observes, as a chance to me.

"No, he hasn't. Do you play, Mrs. Buddermer?" I ask.

"A little. I began it last year."

"*You* don't play, do you?" breaks in Milburd to me, loudly and rudely. He has had his innings; why can't he let me have mine? I feel a presentiment that he intends saying something objectionable so as to make me appear ridiculous before Mrs. Buddermer. These are his tactics invariably.

"Not much," I reply, and am going to talk to Mrs. Buddermer on more interesting subjects, when Milburd laughs loudly, and says—

"You ought to play regularly two hours a day. That would fine you down a bit. Ha! ha! ha!"

If I retorted that "While I was playing Lawn Tennis *he* ought to go to school and learn manners," he would reply, "Well, *you* teach me—you're *old enough*." And I should be obliged to take it all good-temperedly, although if for this sort of thing I could, with moral and physical safety to myself, call Milburd out into the garden, now, on the spot, and shoot him, I would. I don't mean to say that I feel sanguinary and revengeful, but I should just like to *shoot him sufficiently* to give him a lesson; and I feel that if every one could shoot Milburd whenever he was rudely personal, he would soon be stopped without being destroyed, and Society would be considerably the gainer.

The dinner-gong fortunately sounds at this moment. Pognore has to escort Miss Buddermer, who is small, with light frizzy hair, and a pair of eye-glasses which she is perpetually using. She is a sharp, quick talker, and is far older in manner than her step-mother.

Mr. Buddermer is portentous. He is bald. On the strength of this he is accredited with intellectual superiority. Milburd says "he is a very clear-headed man," but explains that he alludes to the absence of hair. He has a philosophic beard, and if in classic drapery, would be an excellent model for Mr. Poynter, or Mr. Alma Tadema. He is opinionated, and argumentative. He reads everything, and apparently learns leading articles off by heart. He is impervious to Milburd's jokes. He is one of those nuisances who *will* read the newspaper aloud to you at breakfast. He is down first (that we found out on the morning after his arrival), and seizes the *Times*, leaving only the advertisement portion on the table. He destroys everyone's enjoyment of the news of the day by telling it us beforehand, picking out bits here and there, prefacing them with such exclamations as "Dear me!" "Only imagine!" "Bless my soul!" or "That's very remarkable!" or "That's very strange!" in order to induce someone to ask him "*What's* very strange?" "*What's* very remarkable?" and so forth, when he invariably reads the paragraph aloud in the most impressive manner.

If (as happens after an experience of three mornings) no one takes any notice of him, he begins, "There's a bad accident at Doddlebrook Junction"—and then reads it; or he observes, "I don't think a Magistrate is justified in saying"—then comes the Police News. Milburd does the state some service at the close of the fourth breakfast by saying, "I wish you'd keep that to yourself. You're so confidential. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Mr. Buddermer the Bald (the Poet calls him "Baldest the Beautiful") takes the hint *and* the paper; with which he disappears every morning, and there is the greatest difficulty in finding it again. This is his revenge.

The Bald One is now vice-chairman of the hospitable board at Boodels.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DINNER WITH THE NEW ARRIVALS—THE VICE-CHAIR—THE FIRST TOPIC—DINNER CANTATA—A SUGGESTION—PRELUDE—FINISH OF FIRST MOVEMENT—NOTES ON THE WEATHER—SOME OF OUR EXCITEMENTS—THE BLUSHER—PLUNGING IN.



AT dinner on this first evening with our new arrivals, the Buddermers, the order of conversation is as follows :— First, the weather, by way of prelude (as I subsequently suggest to Pogmore the Composer, who might do worse than write a Cantata in Eight Courses and a Dessert, entitled *Dinner*, — to my

mind a most expansive idea), led off by Buddermer in the vice-chair, looking as wise as he is bald. In his gravest and most philosophic manner, after having settled himself on his seat and arranged his napkin to his liking, Buddermer, with the air of a man of science intensely interested in the probable forthcoming solution of a problem which has been apparently disturbing his rest for days, put this question to the Poet—

“ *What sort of weather have you been having here lately?* ”

In breathless suspense, and in strained silence, only broken by the Butler handing the soup, we await Mumley’s reply. We, as it were, hang on the Poet’s lips. We are all (I feel sure) trying to recall what sort of weather it has been during the last three days at Boodels, just as boys in a class, dreading individually lest

the question put by the master to number one should be passed on to them, scrub up their wits to try with all their might and main to remember the right answer. We are all becoming mentally confused as to whether it was or was not fine on Monday last, and are inexpressibly relieved when Mumley, with greater presence of mind than could have been expected of a Poet in such an ordinary affair, deliberately replies—

“Well, it has not been much to boast of.”

Whereupon the strings of our tongues being loosened, we shake our heads, the strings of our heads are at the same time loosened also, and declare that Mumley *is* right, and that the weather has *not* been much to boast of. Then Buddermer, in the vice-chair, being a man of vast conversational resources, seizes the opportunity to tell us what sort of weather *he* had (from his account you would think that Providence had arranged the weather for his special annoyance) when he was in Wales this time last year; which reminiscence gives the cue for Mrs. Buddermer to observe to Boodels, “You know Wales, of course, Mr. Boodels?” and Boodels, whose thoughts have been far from the subject of conversation, having been engaged in calculating whether the fish would go all round or not, and whether he hadn’t been helping too plentifully, replies, “Yes—Wales. Oh yes, charming”—sending off a plateful—“beautiful,”—sending off another—“I mean I didn’t like it at all—(to Spurling, *the Butler*), eh? one too many?—oh, that’s all right,”—and he takes the extra plate himself, rejoicing. Then there is a pause. Everybody wondering to themselves what everybody else would like to talk about.

Pogmore the Composer finding the silence oppressive, comes out with, “So you didn’t like Wales, eh, Boodels?”

But the Butler is whispering something in his master’s ear, and there being nothing in Pogmore’s observation calling for immediate attention, no one takes any notice of it, except Milburd, who looks up at him pitifully, touches his forehead, and then resumes his eating, whereat Pogmore looks angry, colours up, is just going to say something sharp, but thinking better of it, dashes in again at a remaining bit of fish, and we relapse into silence.

Murmurings of "No, thank you," and "Thank you, yes," to the Butler's assistant (a hireling) going the rounds with sherry, set us talking again.

Mrs. Buddermer leads off with a note of admiration—"What a *very* pretty place you have here, Mr. Boodels!"

Boodels, pleased, admits, diffidently, that it *is* a pretty place. His smile of satisfaction expresses, "Yes, Nature and myself have done it. 'Nature and Boodels' is the firm."

Mrs. Buddermer continues, "And at the end of your garden I think I saw a considerable piece of water. Is it a river?"

"No," Boodels explains, "it's not a river. It's *fed* from the river. It's a pond."

I know, and we, the *habitués*, all know the remark that is sure to come from some one of the new arrivals. We eye one another as much as to say "You'll see," and are silent.

It comes gravely and oracularly from Buddermer the Wise in the vice-chair, or in the Wise-chair, at the end of the table.

"There ought to be a lot of fish in your Pond, Boodels."

This makes Buddermer one of us; he has made *the* remark, and we can now talk to him in a brotherly spirit.

This observation about "fish in the Pond," is the key to the freedom of Boodels. We are all down on Buddermer the Bald at once. We tell him of the Trimmer and its marvels; we recount wonderful stories of the Eel that must be seen to be appreciated, and which has never been properly appreciated, in consequence of never having been seen. Buddermer bites; even *he*, the stoic, the grave, the bald, the wise, even *he* becomes excited, and, but for the decencies of society, he would rush from the table down to the Pond, and set the Trimmer. The Pond certainly has a marvellous attraction. If, one day, from that Pond should arise a Nix (which does not mean a Nothing, but a sort of German fresh-water Mermaid), who should captivate a visitor, perhaps Buddermer the Bald, and descend with him, fascinated, to the bottom of the Pond, never to return, or to return only once, when there would be such a row with Mrs. Buddermer (who would naturally want to know what had become of him lately) as would either send him back posthaste to the Nix, or keep him terrified on land

until the Nix came to fetch him—and then—oh, what a scene!—to be described hereafter appropriately on the piano by the Composer, and celebrated in verse by the Poet. But this is romance.

Then Mrs. Buddermer winds up this new movement in the dinner cantata with,

“I hope it will be fine enough for us to go out after dinner, and walk down to the Pond.”

And Miss Buddermer, who is shy and blushing and jerky, and who hasn't spoken as yet, but who has been looking about her through her little eye-glasses like a frightened fawn, or as a frightened fawn would if it had eye-glasses and were disturbed while feeding, even she observes nervously to me, “Yes, I *should* like to walk down to the Pond.”

Boodels is afraid that it's not warm enough for *al fresco* amusements after dinner.

While they are discussing this, and going over the old subject of the Trimmer and the Eel, in which, Buddermer, who gives out that he is a fisherman, evinces an immense interest—[By the way, all wise-looking, grave, bald men profess themselves fishermen; they disappear at certain seasons of the year in order to keep up the illusion, generally returning very much sunburnt, and with fierce-looking imitation insects of unnatural patterns, more calculated to frighten the fish into fits than catch them, complicated tackle, nasty awkward hooks, brown baskets and straps—*but no fish*—while they are discussing these important piscatorial matters, and while Miss Buddermer, the nervously near-sighted, and myself are privately and separately determining what we shall begin to talk about to one another, I will just enter a few notes *à propos* of that most important subject in a Country House, viz., the Weather,

I often see in the paper a heading, “The Weather and the Crops.” At Boodels we have no crops, but plenty of weather.

Our first excitement in the day has invariably been, and will ever be, to go down to the Pond and see what the Trimmer has done in the night; for the Trimmer, being a disappointed, rakish kind of fishing apparatus, does nothing all day, in consequence of having been “out all night.” The Trimmer, apparently, while

out all night, generally shows signs of having got into bad company, as it has invariably been robbed of its bait, and presents itself to our eyes, under a very careless and untidy aspect. But that the bait *has* been taken by fish, proves incontestably that there must be fish in the Pond to take it. If what the old proverb says about the sea is true, viz., "There are as good fish in it as ever came out of it," then how excellent must the fish in Boodel's Pond be that have never come out of it at all!

But the visit to the Pond is not our host's first excitement. No, *this* is the state of the weather. Before he enters the breakfast-room, he stops before the glass in the hall, and taps it sharply; sometimes frowningly, sometimes smilingly, sometimes with an air of hopeless resignation. Then we, in the breakfast-room, inquire after the glass, more as a matter of politeness, as one might inquire after the health of Boodels' grandmother or other relative, than from any confidence in the meteorological soundness of the barometer. And Boodels replies reservedly that "it's going up," or "going down," or that "it hasn't moved," or he looks suspiciously at Milburd, and wants to know "if anyone's been touching the glass," which implies either that something awful in storms is being threatened on an evidently fine day, or that the index marks "set fair," when the rain is coming down in torrents. Milburd, in an injured tone, assures Boodels that he wouldn't think of doing such a stupid thing, and Boodels sits down to his egg and toast with a very incredulous air.

The next excitement for Boodels (after a fierce tirade against Buddermer for having disappeared with the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, and two amusing local papers, with which literature in his hand, and in his pockets, we generally, after a hot pursuit, run him to earth in a small secluded arbour, at the end of the kitchen-garden) is again in connection with the weather. He retires to the Library, and locks himself in. When he re-appears, it is with a Weather Chart, which is a piece of paper, scored all over with musical lines, over which runs a zigzag kind of continuous crotchet, indicating (according to Boodels) what direction the wind has been taking since yesterday morning. We then walk out, and look up at the weather-cock, which is a perfect genius of eccentricity. I make my own private annotations and remarks. They are as follows:—

BAROMETER.	WEATHERCOCK.	ACTUAL WEATHER.
Fair.	N. and N.W., then suddenly S., then S.E., but chiefly N. and N.W.	Rain ; dull and muggy.
Rain.	E. N.E. Round again to S.W. Round again to N.E. Generally eccentric, but chiefly E.	Hot. Our best summer day. Lovely sunset. Hardly any breeze to speak of where <i>we</i> are, but then the Weathercock is some forty feet above us.
Stormy.	N., N.E., N.W. Pretty steady to-day : probably tired of its eccentricity yesterday.	Sun shining ; very hot ; scarcely any air. First appearance of wasps ; birds singing ; insects humming ; flies on Pond ; fish leaping out to catch them. Trimmer unmoved.
Fine.	The Arrow going round and round, then stopping, then wagging convulsively, then round again quickly, like the needle on a game of chance making the circle of black and red.	Steady downpour of rain, so that you can hardly see through it.

Evidently, as regards the Barometer and the Weather-cock, two of a trade never agree.

The climate at Boodels is remarkable. When it is hot, it is intolerably hot. The atmosphere, laden with scents of flowers, is so heavy, that the visitors stretch out their hands to push it away from them, and make a hole in it for breathing through ; after this effort they lie on the grass and gasp for breath, like so many freshly-caught fish on the bank of a stream. They drag themselves to the Pond, in the hope of a breeze. But the Pond on such a day appears to have become too lazy even to ripple, and is stagnant. A scum has collected on the surface, and there is most decidedly an odour, an unpleasant odour. Boodels, on this being hinted to him, resents it as a cruel aspersion on his Pond, intended to take away its character. He says,

“ If there *is* a smell ” (and *he* doesn’t smell it, he says), “ it is only vegetable, not animal, matter ; and decayed vegetable matter in a Pond is, *as every chemist* will tell you,” he adds emphatically, “ rather beneficial to health than not.” His guests say,

“Oh, indeed! Is it?”

But they avoid the Pond on these peculiarly beneficial days.

If it's so remarkably healthy, Boodels might make a good thing by turning his house into a Pond-Cure Establishment during the summer.

When it's not oppressively hot at Boodels in July and August, it is so warm and humid, that the subject of conversation is the value of certain mineral waters considered as medicines for torpid livers and bilious headaches. The male guests try to rouse themselves, and go for walks (there are no games at Boodels—Boodels not playing any himself), and the female guests (we are divided like an opera chorus) pass their day in “lying down,” taking tea in their rooms, and reading novels. Fortunately Milburd has discovered a friend of his near at hand at whose house is a billiard-table. Boodels is glad to hear of it, and informs his guests of other people in the neighbourhood who have lawn-tennis grounds and bowling-greens, and who will be only too pleased to see them.

Further Notes.—I remark that the morning in this country-house (and in most country-houses that I've visited) commences with the sound of laborious pumping, as if a wing of the house were on fire and the engines had suddenly arrived. Even the pump, suffering from the climate at Boodels, has become congested, and endures agonies every morning. Its last hydraulic groan is a sigh of relief, when its tortures are at an end.

A little later, I see the result of all this pumping in my bath, where the water is of a light-brown colour with little bits of stick in it, like weak cold tea with a sediment. And about this water there is a fusty sort of smell, which clings to my sponge for days after, and is highly suggestive of the Pond on one of those “scummy” days, which Boodels declares are so highly salubrious.

If *the Eel* were to appear in my bath one morning I should not be surprised.

These are all subjects of conversation with which I can amuse Miss Buddermer, as a stranger to the place at dinner. With one exception already recorded, she has not as yet spoken, but has been sitting very upright, very forward, on her chair (not being otherwise in the least “forward,”) and has been occasionally

glancing out of the nearer eye, nervously, sideways at me, and simpering.

"Simperring" is the word. Till now, often as I have heard the expression, I have never realised its meaning. Miss Buddermer simpers. When not glancing sideways, nor simpering, nor eating, she is engaged in making jerky furtive investigations into what everybody is doing all round the table, and into all corners of the room through her eye-glass. When she uses this, she puckers up her eyes so closely as almost to close them. She "squinnies" through them; that is the word. She squinnies and simpers. I am wondering what topic will interest her, when, as a preparatory note to the key in which I am going to pitch my conversation, I cough. This startles her, she drops her glasses, blushes, regards me askance, blushes more, and then simpers foolishly, as though I had intended something rather *risqué* by my cough. Evidently to prevent misconception I must begin. I dash in with "Are you fond of the country, Miss Buddermer?" at which she blushes more than ever. In fact her face is suffused with blushes. If any observant stranger were to look at us two, *now*, at this moment, he could not avoid coming to the very natural conclusion that I was a villain of the deepest dye, who had, in a low tone, uttered something horribly rude, which has mortally wounded her maiden modesty, and that she is on the point of flying from her ill-mannered persecutor by quitting the table. The latter effect would come from her sitting so far forward, and so rigidly upright. I almost feel inclined to apologise, and to whisper, "Pardon me if I have unintentionally offended you, but I only said, 'Are you fond of the country?'"

I am pausing for a reply, but I can't help thinking that if Boodels has asked as one of the guests, a girl who is bent on misunderstanding everything, and taking offence at nothing, we shall have a nice time of it. I should call her The Blusher. If I were a conquering hero like the late Iron Duke, this could be a new historical picture for the Boodels Gallery, recording my introduction to Miss Buddermer, as "The Meeting of Wellington and Blusher."

She is catching the Speaker's eye; mine, sideways.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DINNER PARTY AT BOODELS—ARISTOCRATIC ANECDOTES—TRUMP CARDS—THE BLUSHER—THE GAME PLAYED OUT—A NEW TOPIC—THE GRAMPUS.



THE DINNER progresses. Mrs. Buddemer regales Boodels with tales of the aristocracy. I am able to catch a few words here and there. She has, I notice, the art of ascertaining, first of all, whether her listener knows anything at all about the subject on which she wishes to talk, and then the amount of her information and gracious

confidences is in inverse proportion to the extent of the other's knowledge.

When Mrs. Buddemer is perfectly sure that her audience is utterly unacquainted with the people and the style of life that form the staple of her conversation, then *their* ignorance is *her* bliss, and she pretends to assume that they *do* know as much as she does (which is probably true), so as to secure their interest, and their vote afterwards, when she is absent.

"We couldn't," she imparts in confidence to Boodels, "we couldn't, *you know*, go to Lady Mountgarret's this season—dear old thing? You know how eccentric she is."

Boodels bows affirmatively, though I am convinced he is as pro-

foundly ignorant of who or what the lady in question is, as I am myself, or, perhaps, as Mrs. Buddermer is, who is perfectly happy to receive her information about the aristocracy, at fourth hand, from dapper little Captain Hangeron, who frequently favours them with his company at dinner, and from old Lady Tattel, who dines out on her title every night of her life, and whose anecdotes of high Society are the delight and glory of the Buddermers' select circle at Bayswater.

"She has," continues Mrs. Buddermer, still speaking of Lady Mountgarret, inclining herself slightly towards Boodels to impress him with the notion that this is for his ear alone,—“she has such *very* odd people about her now, you know, ever since poor Lord Dummelin made that fearful *faux pas*, which everyone was talking about the whole season,—weren't you *dreadfully* astonished when you heard of it?” she asks Boodels.

Boodels doesn't like to admit, point blank, that he is so utterly out of the world as not even to have heard a whisper of what “everyone has been talking about the whole season.” So he replies, with some diffidence—

“The fact is, Mrs. Buddermer, I live so much in the country that I am not in the way of hearing all these scandals.” Here he thinks, he has shown sufficient humility, and accordingly retrieves his character by adding, “But I recollect having heard *something* about the affair you mention.”

If Boodels means that he recollects having *just* this minute heard of it, for the first time, from Mrs. Buddermer, he has given us what might be termed a colourable imitation of the truth; but if he intends to convey the idea that he had been, at some time or other during the season, informed of all the details of the lamentable scandal in question, it is, to say the least of it, a *suggestio falsi* for the sake of humouring Mrs. Buddermer, keeping up his own reputation “as a man who could go into the best society in the land if he would only take the trouble to step out,” and also with a view to assisting the conversation.

“I don't know what Society's coming to, I'm sure!” exclaims Mrs. Buddermer, throwing up her eyes and wringing her hands in elegant despair, “as dear old Tatt—Lady Tattel you know,”—Boodels bows and nods, and steals a glance at his guests as much

as to say, "Yes, yes, Lady Tattel, old Tatt of course. I know what she's talking about—bless you, I'm acquainted with all these swells, only I don't mention 'em before such fellows as you and Milburd?" "Well," continues Mrs. Buddermer, "dear old Tatt who was dining with us the other day, when that naughty old man who knows everything he shouldn't—Lord Baxtayres, you know, I mean him, of course, everybody knows dear old Baxy, as we call him."

Boodels nods affirmatively, and Mrs. Buddermer proceeds with her account of some terrific scandal, in which the highest personages in the kingdom are implicated. We listen, we all listen, we can't help it, breathlessly. Even Milburd is awed. Then, strange to say, everyone gradually joins in the conversation with an anecdote of some person of quality, with whom he (the speaker) is on the most familiar terms, and of whom, up to this moment, when the opportunity for producing him as though he were a trump card only to be played at a right moment has arrived, he has been totally oblivious.

Buddermer the Bald plays into his wife's hands by pretending to deprecate her mentioning what he hints she had heard only in confidence, whereupon Mrs. Buddermer retorts that surely they are *now* among friends who probably have heard most of the details (of whatever scandal they may be talking about at the moment), and she protests she thinks it better to state *the facts*, than to allow a false impression to get abroad. Buddermer shrugs his shoulders, elevates his eyebrows, and gravely strokes his beard, in the character of a Philosopher who, like a Stylites on a pillar, could afford to look down on these mundane absurdities and give them their proper value.

Miss Buddermer becomes more and more nervous. In trying to keep up an under-current of conversation, so as to avoid the aristocratic whirlpool into which everyone is being drawn, I ask her, "I suppose you've been engaged every night during the season?" whereat she blushes so deeply, that it quite pains me, and I feel bound to explain that what I meant was, "Have you been out to parties every night?" To which she replies, simply, "Yes." Then with her profile towards me she regards me timidly out of one eye, (this is a wonderful movement of hers, and

suggests a mixture of shyness and slyness), and with a little nervous titter asks, "Are you fond of dancing?" Then she looks away from me as if she'd said something, oh so bold and so dreadful, that once more I am quite pained, and I wait for her profile to come round to me again in order to give this one-sided view of her my reply. For a second she raises her glasses, looks at everybody comprehensively, but wonderingly, as if astonished to find them all still there since she last looked for them, and then as if startled by my cough, by which I had intended to attract her attention, she drops the glasses as though she'd been shot (she is perpetually acting the suddenly stricken deer), and the simpering profile is again timidly listening to my reply, which, as my lips for this especial conversational purpose only, are for falsehood framed, is to the effect "that I'm very fond of dancing ; but it depends on my partner."

Whereat she blushes so nervously and looks so abashed, that a casual observer would swear I had just proposed to her. Milburd, from the opposite side, breaks off in the middle of the general conversation about the Aristocracy to say to me, "Oh ! you sly dog ! I'm looking at you !" which makes *me* blush in my turn, and brings us (my partner and myself) into the stream of conversation for safety.

By this time the game of the Aristocratic Anecdote has progressed wonderfully ; every one is doing his best to score. Boodels has played a Baronet, which has been trumped by a Literary Lord produced by Hamlin Munley the Poet. Pogmore then led a Roman Prince of great musical reputation who had once dined with him, and who knew the whole truth about what had happened at the celebrated gambling club in the Harz Mountains when Lady Emma came to grief,—“The origin,” puts in Milburd, “of the new slang about ‘Woe, Emma !’”

(But Milburd is passed over as though he had not spoken, and he has to content himself with winking at me and laughing ; but I owe him *one*, and pretend not to notice him, as though he had said something too vulgar to be tolerated for a moment. As a rule, it is dangerous to trifle with Milburd, as you never know how he will retort, but now it can be done with safety, as I am with a respectable majority.)

And when Pogmore has finished this marvellous story in which Royal personages from all countries figure, there is a short pause for breath, and I with some diffidence play a Duke whom I had once met quite pleasantly and agreeably at somebody's Club one evening, and who wouldn't shake hands with me when I came across him again in the Lobby of the Opera, and I had to explain to him who I was, and why I wanted to shake hands with him. I then mentally swore a terrible oath that I would never speak to a Duke again—unless a Duke first spoke to me. However, he is conversationally useful now, and, so to speak, I lug in the Duke by the heels. I play my trump thus:—

“I remember having heard something about what you've just told us,” this to Pogmore, who is pleased at any corroboration, “from the Duke of Dulwich, with whom I was supping”—I choose “supping” as suggestive of the snug and familiar terms I would have them suppose me to be on with his Grace—“the other evening. The Duke—he's a capital fellow, old Dulwich, you know”—I say, addressing myself directly to Boodels, whom I at once implicate in the swindle; “you met him with me at Boulogne, and we all went to the fair together, and did the roundabouts.” Boodels mutters something vaguely in the affirmative, and forthwith plays into my hands as an accomplice.

“Well,” says Milburd, loudly, when the audience is gradually recovering itself after this *douche* of Duke, “Well, I don't think,”—he is speaking in a serious tone, most unusual with him,—“you're right—at least, not from what the Duke said to *me*.” I look up. What does he mean? Does *he* know the Duke—*really*? “He always says what he really means to *me*,” continues Milburd, “as I've known him for years. His son, Earlswood, was at Eton with me. And whenever I have a spare week in September, I run down to Colney Castle for the shooting. It's the jolliest house to stay at anywhere—except, perhaps, Sandringham.”

No, no! this is going too far. The Buddermers are gasping. Old Buddermer is staring reverentially at Milburd, as though he were meditating going down on his knees and worshipping him. Boodels is taken aback, though, in consequence of what Mrs. Buddermer has said before dinner about having met Milburd at Lord Brikfield's, he is not absolutely incredulous. Mumley is bothered,

and Pogmore would rather believe than not. I won't. I say, boldly,—

“*You're not been to Sandringham.*”

Which seems to shock everybody, specially, to my astonishment, Boodels, who asks severely, “Why not?” adding, “If Milburd knows the Prince, he would be compelled to accept his invitation. Besides, I recollect some years ago”—and here comes out the real secret of Boodels backing up Milburd.

He has a romantic, but an old story, (which I have never believed, and which I am convinced, he invented), about his meeting the Queen somewhere in the Home Park by accident, about his being introduced to the Princess Mary of Cambridge, about his requesting them to take their pick out of a pottle of strawberries, which he was eating all by himself under a tree, and how they laughed, and how *he* laughed, and how they invited him to the Castle, and how some of the Royal children had subsequently recognised him, merely from her Gracious Majesty's description, and how they had nodded to him out of a private box, and so forth, which being quite *the* trump card, wins the game, finishes it, and *nous revenons à nos moutons*, though the mutton having vanished, we are now at the chickens.

We all feel that our powers of invention and faculties of credulity have been exposed for the last half hour to too severe a strain. “By one consent,” as the Old Hundredth has it, we drop the conversation, and Hamlin Mumley seeing that there is a chance for him to air his opinions on English Poets, leads up to what *he* himself is going to say, by artfully asking Buddermer the Bald if he has read Swinburne's new prose book?

Hamlin Mumley the Poet little knows the man whom he has singled out as fittest to hold the stirrup for him (Mumley) to mount his Pegasus.

Miss Buddermer, blushing and all profile, says aside to me, “Mr. Mumley has just given Papa what he likes to talk about.”

I am all attention.

Buddermer the Bald pulls himself together, clears his throat, arranges his napkin, strokes his beard, and commences.

“Swinburne, as a writer of prose——”

Here the Butler begs pardon, and sets before him a couple of

chickens to carve. Buddermer nods at the chickens, and recommences :—

“Swinburne, as a writer of prose, is perhaps as perfect a master——”

Here he suddenly starts and dashes his right hand upwards towards his bald head, as if about to brush off an irritating fly. It isn't a fly, however, that has disturbed him, but the hireling waiter who has a grampus-like habit of breathing heavily on you through his nose, which must be peculiarly refreshing on the top of Buddermer's head.

“Swinburne is, I was saying, as perfect a master——”

“'Oek or champagne, Sir?” inquires the hireling Grampus confidentially in his ear, as if this inquiry must be entirely between themselves and go no further.

“'Oek,” replies Buddermer, unconsciously imitating the uneducated Grampus ; then correcting himself, he substitutes “No ; champagne please.” Then, as the Waiter pours out the wine, he resumes, “——a perfect master of the English——Eh, what is it?” This, rather irritably, to the Butler, who is at his left elbow.

“Mrs. Buddermer will trouble you, Sir.”

From Buddermer's face at this moment you can gather that Mrs. Buddermer *does* trouble him considerably. He wrinkles his forehead, unwrinkles it, then takes up the carving knife and fork, and just as Mumley thinks he sees a chance for what he is burning to say, Buddermer takes up the thread of his discourse while commencing to carve the chickens.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PHILOSOPHER—THE FUNNY MAN—A NUISANCE—EXCITEMENTS
—THE COMMENCEMENT OF A MODERN SYMPOSIUM—AN ENTIRELY
NEW CHARACTER.



NEVERTHELESS the Poet Hamlin Mumley has no chance against Buddermer the Bald at Dinner, when the latter has commenced on one of his pet subjects, "the Prose of Modern Poets," handicapped as he is, too, by having to carve the fowls. Poor Mumley, who has let himself in for it, out of a desire to ventilate his own opinions, is compelled to listen, and though he makes a few bold attempts to insert the thin edge of his conversational wedge between the jointings of a chicken, yet they are eminently unsuccessful, as Buddermer has one eye fixed on him, and is down on him, at once, with the

continuation of a suspended sentence, which it would have been the height of rudeness on Mumley's part to interrupt.

As Buddermer's views (which he has lately adopted from some magazine or critical review) are diametrically opposed to Mumley's, the latter is actually writhing at being forced out of mere politeness to hold his tongue, while Buddermer flows on with what

Mumley characterises very strongly afterwards, and in confidence, as "dash'd nonsense."

"He was talking," growls Mumley, "dash'd nonsense about Poet's prose."

"Yes," I reply, "as you couldn't have your say, we had all the *prose* and none of the *cons*."

Nobody laughs very much at this; certainly not so much as it deserves, and Milburd doesn't laugh at all. He pretends to be looking away and thinking of something else, and he, rudely (rudely to *my* mind, because I should have liked the present company to have discussed whether a better thing than this of mine about *prose* and *cons* had ever been attributed to Sheridan, Swift, or Sidney Smith), changes the subject by abruptly inquiring of Boodels, "Is there much game about here?"

If Milburd himself had uttered this *jeu de mot* (or this *bon mot* whatever it may be, perhaps a little of both, say a *bon jeu de mot*) of mine, he would have roared with laughter, himself, first of all, having dug two persons in the ribs, and asked them "if they saw it, eh?" then have explained it, laughing heartily all the while, to two more, and finally taken me (probably) by the arm, walked me into the recess of the window, and have repeated the joke, pointing out to me how really good it was, and how it didn't lose by repetition.

And yet, when *he* hears a joke, a *really* good one, a witticism in fact from anyone else, specially from an intimate friend (I believe he detests all his intimate friends) he perversely *won't* see anything in it; or, if forced to give it his attention by reason of being asked by some one, a stranger of course, whether that (whatever it was) of So-and-so's wasn't very good, he either pretends that he hasn't heard it, or that he has heard it before, when it was first said, *originally*, and so much better by somebody else; and if the *jeu de mot* is absolutely and undeniably new, Milburd will wink at the perpetrator and say, "Hallo! here we are again! *Joe Miller*: page three hundred and two, number six thousand and eighty-four in the books!"

Unfortunately Milburd having a reputation as an authority, the company will, one after another, observe, "Indeed! I did not know it was old;" then, "I fancy I've heard something

like it before," and finally everybody will actually arrive at remembering it distinctly, being led thereto by Milburd. The consequence is that the unhappy person who has said this genuine witticism, which would have been like a thing of beauty and a joy for ever in any society where Milburd wasn't present, will be henceforth looked down upon as that most unpardonable of all social impostors, the man who sets himself up for a humorist above his fellows, and struts in plumes of borrowed wit.

Milburd, as I have intimated, has been asked by Boodels because he is popularly supposed to have such an inexhaustible flow of spirits, and in a Country-House "keeps the whole thing going"—but it strikes me that he "keeps *himself* going" by shutting up every one else in the most brutally loud manner, roaring and laughing, while he morally treads on your toes and gags you. In fact, if one has a good thing to say for the appreciation of the company, the best way (happy thought this) is to tell it to Milburd alone first, secure his approbation and "Hall Mark," as it were, then to lead up to it at dinner, and get Milburd to tell it, when one can seize the opportunity of correcting him in details. It is dangerous to try this more than once, as even in such a case Milburd will betray his trust, and when you (who told him the story) say, "Milburd, tell them what I was telling you this afternoon—you'll do it better than I shall," he will reply, "Well, no one could do it worse, because I really did not see the point of it." "But," you retort, "you laughed!" "I laughed," he will return, coolly, "because I thought it was a practical joke of yours to mystify me. I didn't think it was a story at all." This induces every one to cry out, "Oh, *do* tell it!"

When, if you comply, Milburd *will* interrupt, pretending to elucidate the gist of the story by means of cross-questioning, or he will undertake to tell the joke himself *as you told it him*, and thus make it intensely stupid by carefully omitting the point and the *raison d'être* of the jest.

Milburd may, we all, I believe, *gradually* agree, be "the life and soul of a Country-House," but it must be when there is nobody there but himself.

We have two new excitements now besides the Trimmer, which is set daily by somebody, and watched with the usual sad interest from the bank by everybody. Capital opportunity for joke here—interest from the Bank—which would have set an ordinary company in a roar if Milburd hadn't been present. In his absence somebody would have said it, and we should all have enjoyed the harmless pleasantry; but now, no one dares to joke; we wait for his (Milburd's) jokes as the professional side-splitter, and, if *he* is silent, we are gloomy. And this one of the effects of Boodels having asked a man down here who is "so full of spirits, who will keep everybody going, and be the life and soul of the party." ("Keep everybody going wrong," I think to myself.) And Pogmore the Composer, who resents Milburd's constantly recurring chaff about the Oratorio of *The Ark*, and in whom I confide, agrees with me.

One of the two new excitements, alluded to above, a Hare, which comes out on the front lawn at breakfast-time and takes its meals in a painfully disturbed state of mind. Any sound at any distance disturbs that Hare. He nibbles, and runs away, and hides himself among the bushes. Presently, out he comes again very cautiously, as if he were trespassing, looks round, erects his ears, sits bolt upright like his toy counterpart that plays a drum with his forepaws, decides that it's all right, and nibbles again. His action suggests the idea of his being uncertain about the arrival of some train (behind the laurel bushes) by which he has to go; this uncertainty weighs on his mind, and causes him to just take a nibble, then run off to see if the train has come in, then return, listen with ears erect to be quite sure that he doesn't hear a bell, or a whistle, and then having satisfied himself of this, he squats down again and nibbles hurriedly.

We watch him from the window.

"I say, Boodels," roars Milburd, "I came down here for fresh air, and there's the *same hare* here every morning! Ha! ha! ha! Eh, don't you see, old boy? Eh?" this to Buddermer, who is on the point of giving us an extract from the Newspaper. Buddermer not liking to be dug in the ribs, says, with a sort of grunt, "Yes, I see—hare—very good!" when Milburd repeats it to everybody, still laughing loudly himself. Once, and once only, Buddermer

the Bald, emboldened, perhaps, by some more than ordinarily strong tea at breakfast, comes out of his stronghold (being ordinarily entombed behind *Saturday Reviews* and Literary and Scientific Journals), to attack Milburd. Expecting the support of the company, Buddermer looks up from his *Times*, and says, "Mr. Milburd, you shouldn't laugh at your own wit!"

"It would be a precious long time before I had the chance of laughing at any of *yours*," is Milburd's rough and ready retort—a retort which explodes in a tremendous ha! ha! ha!

Buddermer elevates his eyebrows and looks round on the company as if for assistance, but, meeting with only a frown and a reproving shake of the head from his wife, he succumbs, and revenges himself on society generally by waiting until everyone is engaged in conversation at the breakfast-table, when he walks off with all the newspapers, and cannot be found anywhere for the rest of the morning.

On this occasion even Boodels is compelled to remonstrate with the bald philosopher when he turns up again at dinner, smiling blandly as if utterly unconscious of the wrong he has done to us.

One of Boodels' strong points is the social gathering in the smoking-room in the evening. With our present party—a Composer, a Poet, a Funny Man, a Philosopher and myself (as a link in the conversation—the Linkman) we ought, he says, to enjoy a real symposium. Ladies are admitted if they like to come, and to stop there as long as they care to remain.

Hitherto before the Ladies and the philosophic Buddermer had appeared, we have lounged silently, yawned (much to Boodels' disgust), and dropped off to bed one by one, professing a regard for health and early hours in the country. Now, however, there is a chance for some really intellectual conversation, and for two evenings we have discussed poetry, music, and literature, with Munley, Pogmore and Buddermer as chief debaters. Long after Miss Buddermer has retired, Mrs. Buddermer settles down in an arm-chair, and is soon absorbed in a novel. She generally closes volume the third (her average is a novel a day) sharply, and saying to her husband, "Well, don't sit up all night talking," wishes the company good night and leaves us.

To-night Milburd, who has gone out after dinner to play billiards with a friend, has received permission from Boodels to bring his friend back with him. Being a neighbour recently arrived, Boodels is delighted to make his acquaintance. Milburd has told us that we shall all like Dick Caltop immensely, "as he knows everybody, and something of everything that's going on."

At half-past nine we are in the smoking-room, and as it were "prepared to receive a stranger," when Milburd enters introducing "my friend, Mr. Caltop." We smile, patronisingly, as though the new arrival were a highly privileged individual about to be introduced to a most exclusive circle.

Milburd in a free and easy manner introduces *us* to *him*, not him to us.

Mr. Dick Caltop (about twenty-seven at most), not in the least overawed either by Boodels, or Buddermer the Bald, or by the presence of ladies, nods familiarly all round, and, taking a pipe and a pouch out of the pocket of a very sporting-looking coat, remarks pleasantly,

"I see you don't mind a little bit o' baccy. Quite right: 'they all do it.' After you, Sir," to Pogmore, "with the light," and seats himself on the sofa, as though he had known us all for years.

"Rather rough on you," he says in a tone of good-humoured apology to Boodels, "turning up at this time; but Jemmy," indicating Milburd, "said I must; and Mother didn't say I musn't," here he winks at Buddermer, who tries to smile. "When he told me there was B. and S. on the *tappy*, I said, 'Right you are; that's good enough for me: I'm on.' " And then once more he winks at us all round, gives a knowing shake of the head, and lights his pipe.

Buddermer frowns and strokes his beard with Oriental gravity. He has looked forward to a literary, scientific, and philosophic evening: so have I. I want to hear Pogmore on music, Mumley on poetry, and Boodels on astronomy, orchids, and the Mealy Bug. And we have admitted among us the uncongenial element of a modern slang young man.

Miss Buddermer looks frightened. Mrs. Buddermer resumes

Volume Two of her Novel. Buddermer ignores the new arrival, and sententiously addresses Mumley to this effect: "I suppose you have carefully read Ruskin's last article in the——" when Mr. Caltop inquires of Boodels, with an air of deep interest, "How are you off for rats here?"

And the evening has fairly commenced.



CHAPTER IX.

ACCOUNT OF A "MODERN SYMPOSIUM" WITH A VENGEANCE, OR A
 "NICHT WI' BOODELS O' BOODELS." AFTER WHICH THERE CAN'T
 BE MUCH MORE TO BE SAID OR DONE.



OCCUPIED deeply with Volume the Second of some most interesting novel, and with Volume the Third in her lap (on the "one-down t'other-come-on principle," as our new arrival, young Caltop, would say), Mrs. Buddermer sits ensconced in a comfortable arm-chair in the corner. Miss Buddermer has retired. Buddermer the Bald is on the sofa, with a philosophic-looking meerschaum pipe, eager to air his latest opinions culled from the *Spectator*, *Saturday*, *Contemporary*, and *Fortnightly Reviews*. His great delight is a philosophical literary conversation. Boodels has looked forward to such a Symposium as is now represented in his smoking-room.

Buddermer has suggested the artistic channel into which the conversation is to flow, by saying profoundly (Buddermer the Bald is nothing if not profound) to Mumley, "Have you read Ruskin's article on——" when he is interrupted by Caltop's question to Boodels—

"How are you off for rats here?"

Caltop does not mean this as an interruption. But we are so

placed, that no two of us can enter upon a conversation without cutting into, and right across, the subject of at least two other, if not three, separate conversations. Boodels is obliged to listen to Caltop, it being the latter's first visit ; and besides he is a neighbour.

Buddermar, pretending to ignore the rat theme which continues as an accompaniment to *his* air, and worries him considerably, continues :

"I see that Ruskin is going to bring out a new work on *Mediæval Forms*. Now, judging from his"—

Here Mumley cuts in with a reply :

"Judging of Ruskin from the *Fors Clavigera*, you were going to say ? Well, it is hardly fair to form an opinion of a future Work by the opinions put forward in——"

I am deeply interested. I want to know something about *Fors Clavigera*. Is it a Poem ? or a Treatise ? or English ? or Latin ? But the more eagerly I attempt to listen to them, the more distinctly rises, under my nose, the account of a little Terrier Dog catching rats, which is being given by Caltop to Boodels, in a louder tone than he would have otherwise used, had not Milburd from *his* end of the room cut in, and asked how "Fanny" (the Dog's name) was getting on.

"Oh, first rate !" replies the Sporting Young Man. "I am telling the Governor here," he alludes to Boodels as the Governor, never having met him before in his life ! how she wired into that old rat under the old floor. She *did* tackle him to-rights ! Rather !" And here he pauses, as if dwelling on the recollection of a picture which beggars description.

Availing ourselves of this voluntary cessation, Boodels turns slightly towards Mumley, and so do I, politely intimating by this movement that we wish to drop rats and take up Ruskin. Mumley, who has the parole, is naturally pleased. Triumph of Mind over Ratter. Buddermar foresees his turn will come, and, without in the least attending to Mumley, rehearses mentally what he is next going to say. I know this by his shutting his eyes and smoking slowly, as if he were weighing his opponent's arguments.

"Ruskin," says Mumley, with a contemptuous air, "flatters himself he has founded a school—but, in this respect, he *does* flatter himself. In what has he ever shown himself as either a

critic, or a true student of Art in its highest sense, but a man of one, narrow——”

“Have you got that Fox-Terrier still?” asks Milburd, not loudly, but in an under-current of voice, that takes away, as it were, the legs of the dialogue which, but for this, would go on swimmingly.

Caltop nods, and, turning to Boodels, asks,—

“Did you ever see that little liver-coloured dog of mine?” No, Boodels hasn’t; and, having said this much out of sheer politeness, he tries to catch up the Ruskin subject again, which at the present moment is stationary, merely keeping itself afloat by spasmodic efforts with the hands against the under-current aforesaid. These efforts are apparently unnoticed by Caltop. I try to help Mumley and Buddermer, who are struggling. I say,—

“Didn’t Ruskin get a lot of Oxford Men to work for him during the Vacation at digging?” (It is all I know of Mr. Ruskin, but I think it represents the latest popular idea about that eminent individual.)

If Buddermer, or Mumley, would only catch at this rope, it would save them; but they won’t; they are above it; they are bent on discussing Ruskin and High Art. They both nod assent and dismiss me, as it were, as not coming up to their standard of intellect, and Buddermer commences instantly about “Ruskin being, after all, a mere dilettante professor who——” just as Pogmore, tired of silence, and anxious to bring the conversation round to the only subject in which he is personally interested, observes to me (over their heads, as he is standing up to help himself to soda-and-brandy), “I saw you at the Wagner Concert. Didn’t you think,” &c.

But at this moment, whatever was to have been his question, it is lost in a reply made to Caltop by Boodels, who has become suddenly interested in the former’s conversation, on account of his having judiciously praised one of Boodels’ little dogs (the nervous one that won’t answer to its name, and is frightened at the sound of its own bells round its neck).

“Yes,” says Boodels, pleased with Caltop, who is evidently a sporting man, and an authority on dogs and horses, “he is a very good breed.”

"Oh, I can see that," says Caltop, eyeing the little animal, which is curled up on the rug fast asleep; "he has all the points of a thoroughbred black and tan. You don't often see one like that now-a-days."

"No," says Boodels; "I am rather proud of that dog."

"You used to have a pug," Milburd says from his side to Boodels. "A lovely pug. You ought to have seen *that*," he remarks to Caltop.

"Oh, I often saw that pug," cries Caltop. "He used to come as far as the corner of the lane by Sir Martin Crupper's house, and then run back again. You know Crupper, don't you?" he asks of Boodels.

No, Boodels doesn't. As a matter of fact, he says, he has never cultivated his neighbours. Mrs. Buddermer looks up from her book at the mention of Sir Martin. Buddermer has caught the name, and evidently begins to have a better opinion of Caltop.

"Georgy Martindale and Lord Grassmere, you know," says Caltop to Boodels, with a careless look round, which Milburd replies to with a nod of intelligence, "were standing at Sir Martin's stable-door, and we often tried to coax your pug in, but he wouldn't come."

Boodels is immensely pleased. He fills his pipe modestly, and almost blushes as he remarks that that pug was a dog for which he could have taken a first prize had he wished to compete at the Crystal Palace Dog Show. From this moment it is all up with Ruskin and music. I think that even the interest of Mrs. Buddermer in Volume the Second is momentarily diminished. We all help ourselves (not for the first time) to refreshments. Pipes are replenished. Mrs. Buddermer saying, pleasantly, that she is "quite accustomed to smoke" (which means that she intends to sit up for her husband), takes up Volume the Third, and then we settle down into talk about dogs, horses, stables. Everybody suddenly remembers that he knows a dog that can do something. Even Buddermer commences a story about a valuable retriever which was given him some years ago. It interests nobody. He appeals to his wife for corroboration. She looks up for an instant, and says, "That horrid thing! I'll never have another in the

house! It's all very well for people who understand dogs, but *you* don't."

After this Buddermer refreshes himself, but is prudently silent.

"Ah," says Caltop, "you should see Mrs. George Bigg's retrievers. George Bigg," he explains to everyone, "used to drive in the Park last season. You *must* have seen her." This to every one, beginning with Boodels, who at once "thinks he remembers her;" then to Buddermer, who appears to be trying to recall *all* the people he has ever seen in the Park, in order to single out the lady in question.

"She used to drive four ponies," says Milburd.

"Yes," returns Caltop. "They were the Earl of Shortland's. One of those ponies—Jessie, the black one—was no bigger than a Newfoundland, and one day when a boy fell in the Serpentine, she went for that boy, collared him, and brought him out."

"They wanted to stop Georgey Bigg's wife from coming into the Park followed by all these animals," continues Caltop; "for he had a couple of goats, and three fallow deer besides the ponies. The police were inclined to be rather rough on Georgey, but he got six to four the best of 'em, and then bet Boss Green—you know Boss Green?"—this to Milburd, who nods assent, and we all wonder who Boss Green is, but don't like to inquire—"a couple of ponies that he'd take the whole menagerie right through to the Magazine when all the four-in-hands were out."

"And did he?" I ask, vaguely, for I am not certain whether my inquiry applies to Boss Green, George Biggs, or Lord Shortland, or perhaps somebody else whose name I've missed.

"Did he?" exclaims Caltop, as if utterly astonished at the ignorance displayed by my question. "I should rather say he did. They wanted to stop him. One Bobby tried it on, but Georgey—*our* Jargy, as we call him—tipped the peeler a sparkler (he'd have made it warm for Master Bobby if he hadn't taken it), and then he went, full split, right up the drive, with all the *animiles* careering after him, a regular buster, before you could say knife. The Duke couldn't start his team; it gave him fits! It was real jam to see little Norris, who was out for the first time, in a horrid state about his four greys. Georgey did the trick. They said he hedged the bet, but anyhow he copped Boss Green's fifty quid."

"Rather rough on the Boss," I venture, with a mild attempt at suiting my conversation to my company.

"Oh, the Boss!" exclaims Caltop, "he's a regular mug."

Everyone appears amused, and no one likes to ask what on earth Caltop means. At this moment the Poet remarks that there's a fine moon, and opens the window to look at it. Mrs. Buddermer asks her husband to give her the slightest drop of sherry-and-water. This causes the Butler to be summoned to fetch the sherry; when he appears, Pogmore complains of the cold in consequence of the window having been opened. Milburd agrees that it *is* cold, and Caltop remembers that he'll probably have a chilly walk home. Buddermer casually mentions "hot grog" as the best preventive. Boodels, as host, asks if Caltop would like some hot grog before he starts, as, if so, the Butler can make a first-rate brew. Caltop at first refuses, then alters his mind, and saying, "I really *must* go immediately after *that*," he, to use his own expression, "goes for that grog." Milburd admits that *he*, too, is "Nuts on grog." I notice that whenever Caltop, or Milburd, likes anything, they are either "nuts on it," or it is "real jam" to them. Odd! Pogmore observes "That he doesn't mind if he *does* just take a drop of hot grog." Whereupon Buddermer begins to think that it wouldn't do *him* any harm, which evokes a look of surprise, and a warning, from his Wife, who, however, consents, after a very brief argument, to assist him with a mere sip. Boodels hasn't taken hot grog for years, he says, and now they mention it, he rather feels inclined for it than otherwise. The only one who has any doubts at all on the advisability of hot grog is the Poet, who returns from the window (which we all insist on being shut at once) looking as if the moon had had some effect on his complexion.

"Have some grog," Caltop suggests to him, with an aside wink to us; "just to show there's no ill-feeling."

As the ill-feeling, to judge by the Poet's face, is confined entirely to himself, and has regard to no one else, the administration of the hot grog is questionable. Mumley accepts and subsides into his arm-chair. The conversation re-commences on general topics, by which I mean, that, with the exception of Mumley, who is remarkably silent, we are all talking, more or less, at once. The Butler

re-appears with double the quantity of hot grog that was ordered. This probably from a knowledge of human nature, and to save himself trouble. We all resolve ourselves into a tasting committee, and commence sipping.

"This is the sort of stuff," says Caltop, "to walk home on."

Then he says what he would do were he waylaid by a footpad. This leads us to the subject of highwaymen; then to recent highway robberies; then to burglaries; then to anecdotes of eminent house-breakers, till Mrs. Buddermer's attention is distracted from her Novel, and she begs us not to talk on such dreadful subjects, or she won't get a wink of sleep all night. Whereupon Buddermer (whose hair seems to have suddenly grown wild round his bald head) facetiously offers her a "night-cap" of grog. This leads to an examination of the jug, which is found to be empty.

Boodels rises gravely with a long cherrywood-stemmed pipe in his hand, which he has been carefully lighting every five minutes for the last half hour, and, with studied politeness, says,—

"Mrs. Bud'mer, Milburd will ring bell more grog."

Whereupon he reseats himself most carefully—his original intention, of walking as far as the bell, having been evidently abandoned.

Buddermer thinks quite pleasantly that we don't want any more, and beams on everybody.

Caltop says that, as he has to go out and walk, another tumbler won't hurt him; and Milburd (who has rung the bell violently and returned to his chair) announces loudly his intention of "seeing him through it."

Mumley the Poet wakes up for a minute, and asks, huskily, "What's time?" Receiving no reply, Buddermer alone taking any notice of it by making a movement with his left hand as though he remembered having had a watch somewhere once, but had recently got out of the way of consulting it,—his head drops again, and he is asleep. I notice all this clearly, but I do not feel inclined either to leave my seat and fetch the fresh grog from the table, or to join in any conversation. The Butler pours out the relay, and hands it round to everybody. Boodels at this point becomes scrupulously particular as to the quantity of whiskey which the Butler has put into his particular tumbler.

"I never," he tries to explain, solemnly, to anybody who'll listen to him, "take more'n 'arfglass to thlee" (he means "three") "to thlee plarts wart," by which he is understood to mean "three parts water," and we all nod at him gravely, like a consultation of waxwork doctors worked by machinery.

On being earnestly assured by the Butler that this proportion has been carefully observed, he consents to take the tumbler.

What leads us to talk of people's heights I don't know, but we do. Caltop bets with Pogmore that Buddermer is taller than Milburd. Boodels says, with the knowing air of a man who can settle the question at once, "I've got plencil somewhere in my plocket. The best way's to mlake the mlarck on the door." However, as he can't find either the "plocket" or the "plencil," the subject is allowed to drop.

The next thing we become aware of is, that Caltop has disappeared. No one saw him go. No one said good-night to him.

Boodels suddenly recollects having said good-night to somebody, but "whether," he adds, always gravely, "it was to-night, or whether I'm thinking of some other time, I don't know." Then, after five minutes' silence, he calls to mind distinctly Caltop having wished him good-night, and he is quite angry with Buddermer, who wants to argue with him on the impossibility of Caltop having left unobserved by the rest of the party. However, he is certainly not in the room.

This leads to the subject of marvellous appearances; this to the disappearances of phantoms; this to ghosts; this to Milburd's open avowal of general incredulity; this brings up Pogmore, who is fond at certain times of discussing the supernatural; this to a dash of theology, when Buddermer, who has got some theory in his head about stars being peopled by spirits, and the contents of whose fourth tumbler are now damaging the sofa-cover, makes vain efforts to remember and enunciate an argument on the *Plurality of Worlds*, which he has recently read.

"If," he says, with a pipe-stem in his hand, from which the bowl has long since dropped off, "if the creative power—I mean—s'pose I," here his eyelids droop, but he is aroused to wakeful-

ness by accidentally putting his hand flop into the mess on the sofa, "s'pose I were to have to cre-ate a world——"

But at this point Mrs. Buddermer closes Volume Third with a sharp click, and says, sharply,—

"Create! *You* create! Nonsense! It's time you created to bed. Good-night, Mr. Boodels."

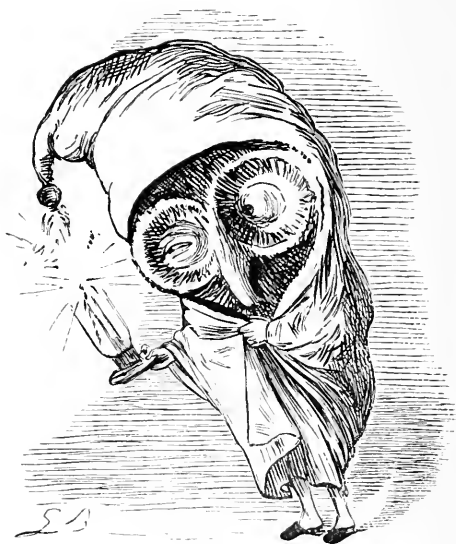
Boodels, as host, rises from his chair in order to open the door for Mrs. Buddermer. The door is on the opposite side furthest from Boodels, and to reach it he has to get round the table. With his empty pipe still held to his mouth by one hand, he with the other guides himself round the edge of the table. Then, with one short and decisive step to the door, he grasps the handle, and opens it with such unexpected suddenness, that it backs on to himself and cannons him up against Milburd, who catches at the chimney-piece. Recovering himself, Boodels smiles and bows with the sort of excessive politeness that is to be seen on the part of the Comic Baron in the opening of a Pantomime, and when Mrs. Buddermer [who has carefully taken the candle out of her husband's hand, and sent him on first into the passage, where he tumbled over the mat and made the dog bark] has retired, Boodels surveys us with a sad and sorrowful aspect, makes three attempts to light his candle, drops the match-box, then, having opened the door carefully for his own exit, he addresses us most solemnly, as if these were his last injunctions before being led off by the executioner,—

"I deprend p'n you put out glas," meaning that he depends upon us (the Poet, Milburd, Pogmore, and myself) to put out the gas; and with this, he too, after a difficulty with the rug and the dog, retires. We all laugh and look at one another: all, that is, except the Poet, who is now snoring heavily.

"Don't go—quite early—have 'nother pipe," is the last that I hear in a very drowsy tone from Milburd, as I *do* manage to light a candle and get to my room, where, in the midst of undressing, it occurs to me that I haven't made my diary for several days past. . . . Evidently this carelessness mustn't be allowed to go on, I say to some one (not myself) in the looking-glass. I take out the book—the pens—the blotting-paper. . . . Odd—there doesn't seem to be any ink . . . and the neck of the inkstand

is too small. . . . Ah! . . . I thought that would happen with such a stupid inkstand . . . over. . . . Wonder . . . wonder . . . “The best thing,” I am conscious of saying to myself—giving it as a sound and invaluable piece of advice—“the best thing is, . . . if you’re tired, my friend, to go to bed. Nothing like going to bed . . . when you’re tired. My dear fellow,” still to myself, as somebody to whom I am imparting words of unutterable wisdom—very nearly unutterable, by the way—“my dear fellow—take my advice—and go . . . go . . . to . . . bed.”

And somehow or other, all in a lump, I fall in, and become absorbed in the bedclothes. A steamboat sensation for a few minutes, as if in the Bay of Biscay in roughish weather . . . then we sail with the gale *from* the Bay of Biscay oh, and are fast asleep.



CHAPTER X.

THE MORNING AFTER—BREAKFAST—GRUMPINESS—EVERYBODY WRONG—THREATENING OF STORM—CHAFF—FIRST DISAGREEABLE—SECOND—THIRD—ALL DISAGREEABLES—DIVISION—PARTING SHOTS—THE LAST TO LEAVE—THE TELEGRAM—THE NOTE—A CHEERFUL ARRIVAL—MY DEPARTURE—BOODELS' CONSOLATION—END.



THE morning after the Symposium. Irregular breakfast. Dull morning. Leaden sky. Everything damp, specially the boots, which come up as if they'd been cleaned under the pump. A slimy chill about the atmosphere generally, such as one might feel for a minute or two after putting one's hand suddenly and unexpectedly on a pond-frog. The perverse glass in the hall is, of course, going up. The eccentric weather-cock in the meadow is twisting about, restlessly, up above, as much as to say,

"Here's your fine fresh air! Climb up here! Here's your fine fresh air at the top of the pole!"

As we drop in, one by one, to breakfast, Mrs. Buddermer (in a long green velvet dress, and a very pronounced gold chain round her neck, and tucked in at her waist somewhere, suggesting the idea of a *Diana Vernon* who had been made Lady Mayeress) holds up her hands, and pretends to be shocked. Miss Buddermer blushes and simpers. I observe to her, "We were rather late last night, Miss Buddermer." She replies, in her usual startled manner,

"Yes—very." Then she blushes deeper than ever, simpers nervously, and hurriedly putting up her *pince-nez* looks straight through it, earnestly, at the tea-urn, as if for protection.

Buddermier has, as usual, been down before any of us, and is seated on the *Telegraph* reading the *Times*. Munley the Poet has intimated that he does not wish for any breakfast, and has gone as far as the Pond to look at the Trimmer.

Milburd is less noisy than usual, and asks for a bloater. He speaks of himself as "feeling a bit chippy," and wonders how Caltop got home. We all wonder how Caltop got home; for, as no one saw him leave, there is a generally pervading idea that he is still in the house, having perhaps tumbled into the hat-and-cloak closet, and there passed the night.

Boodels comes down, complaining bitterly of a headache. He will take nothing but very hot tea, and very dry toast. He remarks that he can't account for his feeling so unwell this morning, as last night he didn't sit up later than usual, and really did not take half so much as he ordinarily does. Pogmore the Composer, who looks pale about the cheeks and very red about the eyes, but who tries to keep up an air of forced gaiety, observes that *he* thinks everyone had too much last night.

Boodels won't admit it for an instant. "*You* may have had too much," he says to Pogmore. "*I* hadn't; and I'm sure no one else had."

At this, the Bald Philosopher, from behind his newspaper, elevates his eyebrows, but makes no observation. Pogmore looks at Milburd and myself significantly, and Milburd says,

"Well, I fancy that Caltop had as much as was good for him." Thereby evidently intending that the gentleman in question had taken *more* than was good for him.

"No," Boodels replies positively, and really charitably, "*I* don't think so. In fact," he adds, which, by the way, shows his reason for acquitting Caltop of inebriety, "*I* don't think anyone took too much. *I know I didn't!*"

"At all events," says Pogmore, sticking to his point, "no one can eat breakfast this morning."

"That's the weather," retorts Boodels, becoming rather annoyed at Pogmore's persistence in charging him and his guests with an

orgie. "Besides," he adds, looking round, "it strikes me everyone has made a very good breakfast."

"Capital!" cries Milburd. To which sentiment I also respond affirmatively, feeling it due to Boodels as our host.

"I'm afraid we kept *you* up very late, Mrs. Buddermer," Boodels says courteously, but inquisitively, as if *her* evidence on the matter would settle the question.

"Oh, not at all!" she replies, cheerfully; "I'm accustomed to it. When we were at Swyllin—Lord Lushborough's place, you know—in Hertfordshire—we used to sit up much later than that every evening."

Buddermer, having finished his papers, and probably foreseeing that he will be lugged in to corroborate his wife's recollections of the aristocracy, rises, stretches himself, walks to the window, looks out, and observes, "I wonder where the Hare is this morning?"

He refers to the hare, or rabbit, which has regularly come out to feed on the Lawn since we've been in the house. For a *bald* man, in the presence of such a professional wag as Milburd, he could not have made a more unfortunate remark.

"Where's the Hare?" repeats Milburd. "Why, that's what *you* must say every morning when you look in the glass! Ha! ha! ha!" And Milburd roars. Then, seeing that Mrs. Buddermer is bridling up, that Miss Buddermer is blushing, and that everyone is made uncomfortable by this personality, he bursts into a guffaw, slaps Buddermer on the back, "Eh? Ha! ha! ha! Where's the *hair*? Eh?" Then, holding his victim's elbow, and addressing us, he shouts, "That's what he asks every morning! The long-lost *hair*! Eh? Have you got a strawberry-mark on your left arm?" This to Buddermer, who is stroking his beard, and trying hard to preserve his philosophic calm; but he is glaring dangerously. Under much of this torture Buddermer would go mad.

Unfortunately, Milburd is not to be put down by any repartee, however brilliant, or by any retort, however rude. In either case he will simply repeat his own jest with louder laughter and more slaps on his victim's back, or digs in his victim's ribs. Nor is he to be put down by brute force, for Milburd Junior is a cricketer, an athlete, and as strong as a cart-horse. He is a sort of Franken-

stein's Monster suddenly become a stupid jester and perpetual practical joker, and we, *pro tem.*, are Frankensteins, each in turn.

Mrs. Buddermer leaves the room, followed by her daughter. Buddermer stalks out by the window, and the rabbit or hare, or whatever it is, frightened, makes a bolt into the laurels. He walks round the house, frowning, and subsequently is seen to join the Poet at the Pond. When we next observe them they are standing gloomily, about three yards apart, with their backs to the house, contemplating the Pond, while between them stands, sympathetically, the Peruvian Goose with the port-wine beak. The three are as motionless, with the exception of an occasional sign of life in the Goose's tail plumage, as if they'd been frozen up on the spot.

Boodels is annoyed with Milburd, who, in a huff, replies that Buddermer is an old ass if he can't take a joke. Boodels begs Milburd to remember that not everyone can stand chaff; to which Milburd replies that those who can't had better remain in their own rooms. Pause: verge of row. Pogmore, with a view to changing the subject pleasantly, tells us that he is going to try something of his own composition on the piano previous to writing it out.

Boodels, from behind the *Daily Telegraph*, growls out, "What, more of your rubbish? Mind you don't bother the Ladies; and if you're going to strum on the piano, *shut the doors!*"

"Oh, I won't play at all, if you don't like it," says Pogmore, very angrily, grasping the door-handle.

"I don't mind," returns Boodels, still reading the *Daily Telegraph*, as if he didn't want to be bothered. "I don't mind, as long as *I don't hear it*. That's all."

Pogmore quits the room in a fury. I do pity him. Fancy a young Handel being told by a friend not to "strum his rubbish on the piano!" In another second he has banged a hat on his head, and with both hands rammed into his trousers' pockets, he is walking with an agitated step towards the Pond.

"Come," says Milburd to Boodels, "don't *you* talk to *me* about chaff! Why, that's far worse than anything I said to Buddermer."

But Boodels takes no notice of the retort, and continues reading most provokingly. I have the *Times*. Milburd leaves the room sullenly. After a short deliberation he takes one of Boodels' favourite sticks (an ebony cane, with a silver lizard curled round the top), and switching the flowers as he goes, walks leisurely towards the Pond. Now nothing irritates Boodels so much as anyone walking off with this particular cane. I foresee a row when I catch sight, from the Library window, of Milburd's proceedings.

I see the three at the Pond. All gloomy, as if meditating suicide. The two Ladies, wrapped up, are strolling on the paths. Presently they join the gentlemen at the Pond. Evidently a conspiracy.

Another moment, and I hear the Dog with the bells scampering about and barking; also another dog. From which I infer that Boodels is in the hall getting his hat, previous to going out "for a turn."

There is a great rattling of the umbrella stand, and a shaking of all sorts of things in the Hall.

Then the Butler's voice, "I don't know where it is, Sir."

Then Boodels, angrily demanding "Who cleans the Hall in the morning?" Then the Butler calling the Maid. Cross-examination of the Maid. She's certain *she* didn't move it. It was here this morning, she's sure. The Butler, too, will swear to having seen it yesterday. Boodels more and more angry. He bursts into the Library.

"Have *you* taken it?" he asks, abruptly.

"What?"

"My ebony cane with the lizard top."

No, I haven't. But, I suggest, rather maliciously (because why should he always suspect *me* of taking everything?—as a fact, he always does) "Perhaps one of the others has got it."

He won't go out without it; not even into the kitchen-garden. It has become a necessity. The Butler will go and ask if anyone's got it, and, if they have, he will bring it back. From the window we see the Butler on his way to the Pond. We witness his reception by the assembled conspirators. It is all pantomime action to us. It does not inspire confidence in the result. All that Boodels

has said, since sending the Butler, is, as he stood at the window eyeing the scene, "I hate practical jokes." This is meant as a warning to me, not to take one of his sticks.

The Butler returns empty-handed. With a half-grin he says (more to me than to his master), "Mr. Milburd says, Sir, as he's very sorry, but in trying to catch the Eel, the stick tumbled into the Pond."

"Nonsense!" exclaims Boodels, exploding.

In a second *he* is down at the Pond, myself after him. We are all at the Pond now. Milburd insists on the stick having fallen in, and tells Boodels, if he doubts him, to go into the Pond and see, and offers to buy him another, in the Lowther Arcade, for fourpence-halfpenny. This is too much. Boodels accuses Milburd of upsetting everybody, and of being rude to the Buddermers. Milburd appeals to the latter. The Ladies are sure that Mr. Milburd was not intentionally rude; while Buddermer, who has suffered, most magnanimously replies that, for *his* part, *he* doesn't mind being chaffed. "Of course you don't!" returns Milburd, enthusiastically, and with a hearty slap on Buddermer's shoulder that makes the Philosopher wince, and causes him to add with considerable feeling, "But I protest against being *hit* on every possible occasion."

Milburd roars, and shakes the Philosopher's elbow, saying, "Why that's half the fun. You'll enjoy it when you're used to it. Let me give you a good whack now, and see how you'll laugh."

Buddermer, however, retires a few paces, holding up his hand deprecatingly.

"No, thank you," he says, "one must draw the line somewhere."

"Yes, draw a line in the Pond," returns Milburd the incorrigible, "and bring up the Eel and the Stick. I say," he shouts to Boodels, "I dare say the Eel is walking about with it in the mud, and Pogmore can put him into his Oratorio. Solo for Eel on going into the Ark. Ha! ha! ha!"

Boodels walks away. It is of no avail that, subsequently, Milburd reproduces the Stick, and pretends to present it, as a testimonial, to Boodels from his admiring friends. This evening

Boodels draws our attention to a calendar, and shows us the dates he has arranged for certain guests to come.

He says, as if he were merely giving us hints on how to conduct an establishment, "You see, if one didn't do this, I should never be able to get all my friends here. Everyone understands that, you know; and so I always name the day of arrival and of departure, so that *they* can arrange their own plans elsewhere. It's so much better to do it in this way."

Mrs. Buddermer, very shortly, agrees with Boodels. "Oh, of course," she says, "it's the *only* way. You're quite right. You know I told you we couldn't stop beyond to-morrow, as John and myself have to go home first, and then to the north to Kupford—Sir Minton Burridge's place. Sir Minton is a connection of ours, you know, so we are bound to go to him, and we shall be *there* for three weeks or a month."

This is (as Caltop would have said) "a nasty one" for Boodels, who has now to pretend that the Buddermers' departure quite takes him by surprise.

Mumley says he finds the atmosphere here uncongenial to composition, and that he wants to get somewhere where he can breathe. He explains himself as not intending any snub to Boodels, by adding, "You see in some places I feel I am at once inspired! In others I don't." He has decided to leave to-morrow morning, to seek inspiration.

Pogmore gives Boodels a parting dig by observing, "Sorry I must go, old fellow; but I must get on with what you call 'my rubbish,' and to be in a room alone, with pens, ink, and paper, and a piano, is an absolute necessity for *me*."

"I'm coming to stop with you," says Milburd in Boodels' hearing to Dick Caltop, who has driven round in a pony-trap in which he is seated at the door, having pulled up with a loud shout of "Woa, Emma!"

"Right you are!" replies Caltop. "How's the Governor to-day?" meaning Boodels, who speaks of himself as being *not* very well.

"Another good man gone wrong?" exclaims Caltop laughing, whereat Milburd laughs too.

"I thought you wired in a bit too much last night. I'm

altogether rumbo," he admits ; by which we take him to mean that he is not quite so well as might have been expected. This is how *we* translate "rumbo." "I'll take you now, if you are ready," he adds.

The Butler, hearing this, asks Milburd if he shall pack up for him, as it won't take five minutes.

"Yes," cries Caltop, "put 'em in the bag!" and within a quarter-of-an-hour Milburd has driven off with his friend.

"I hate everyone going at once." Boodels confides to me when they've all retired early. "It's so dull in a house which has been full of company."

It is. And that's the reason why I'm going away too. I don't like to mention this. Next morning, on pretence of seeing the Poet off, who is going by the first train, I stop at the telegraph-office, and wire to a friend, answer paid, to send me a business message compelling my immediate presence.

All the guests leave before Boodels is up. My telegram arrives just as he comes down to breakfast. I break its contents to him gently.

He tries to induce me to stay by hinting that "Now they've all gone, and it's quite quiet down by the Pond, *we may have some sport.*"

"No," I say pleasantly. "We must leave the Eel for another time." In fact I know well enough that he no more believes in the Eel than I do.

A letter by post for Boodels. He brightens up.

"It's from Dulton!" he cries delighted. Then he rings for the Butler, and says, triumphantly, "Mr. Dulton's coming down this afternoon," and he gives directions for *my* room being immediately prepared for the visitor.

I have a great mind *to stay*, and see if there is such a person, as it occurs to me that the coming of Dulton is about as real as the business of importance in my telegram.

Boodels is in ecstasies about Dulton. "He is," he says, "the most charming fellow. His information on every subject is something quite marvellous. Buddermer couldn't hold a candle to him. Besides, Dulton has his own original ideas, and Buddermer hasn't. He plays and sings delightfully, and never refuses when he's asked,

as Pogmore does ; and then he is a thorough musician. He writes in most of the magazines, and many of his poems are worthy of Tennyson at his best, and he's not so conceited about it as Mumley is. Dulton will read his poems to you without affectation ; Mumley won't : he thinks that he's throwing pearls to swine."

"Dulton," I observed, "must be a clever fellow."

"Clever !" cries Boodels. "He is clever ! And so funny ! *Real* humour ! not stupid practical jokes like Milburd's. Some of Dulton's stories have kept me laughing—crying with laughter—for hours. And the way he tells them !! I really do not know any one," says Boodels, summing up, "who is so thoroughly good a companion as Dulton."

"Is there a Mrs. Dulton ?" I ask.

"Ah, I hope she'll come too," replies Boodels, who I notice, by not giving a direct answer to my question, confirms my suspicion as to the total unsubstantiality of the Dultons : "for," he continues, "she is simply *the loveliest* woman I *ever* saw. A perfect lady ! She goes about three times as much as Mrs. Buddermer, and into the very highest society—(I *know* she often goes to tea at Windsor Castle in the Queen's private apartments, who consults her on all sorts of subjects ; she's a *great* friend of the Queen's)—but she isn't always talking about the aristocracy as Mrs. Buddermer is. When people talk so much about it, I don't believe 'em."

Consequently, if all this is true, the Dultons in their two selves represent, only in perfection, all the talents of the recent party. But I can't stop to see these *rare aves* without my telegram plan being discovered. So I congratulate Boodels on the accession of Dulton, and, thanking him for a very pleasant time, take my departure.

As I am stepping into my fly at the door, a short man, in a suit of dittos, an old umbrella, and a dingy, out-of-shape wideawake, followed by a boy with a florid carpet bag, walks up, very warm and very dirty.

"Is M—M—M—M—Mister Boo—hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo—dels in ?" he asks, in a very loud voice, and with the most determined and provoking stutter.

Boodels steps forward.

"Hulloa, Dulton !" he exclaims ; "I'm delighted to see you."

And he tries to draw him out of earshot. But Dulton cannot be got out of earshot so easily.

"I've cur—cur—cur—cur—cur—come down," I hear him saying, "to sus—sus—sus—sus—see you. Der—der—der—der—did you get my lel—lel—lel—lel—letter, eh?"

Dulton may be the cleverest and brightest and most amusing creature in the world, his stories may be the most laughable, but his way of telling them must be wildly irritating. Boodels is welcome to him. But what desolation, after a week of company, to be left in an old house, in damp, heavy weather, with only a stuttering man for a companion!

And so I return to Town, after my Few Days in a Country-House,—*i.e.*, *chez* Boodels of Boodels.



FRIENDS AT A DISTANCE.

I. MIDLAND COUNTIES.

FRIENDS AT A DISTANCE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ACCIDENTAL MEETING—SPONTANEOUS INVITATION—HESITATION
— DECISION — EXPLANATION — INSTRUCTION — SUGGESTIONS —
INSULTING A TRIED COMPANION—THE BAG—THE ADDRESS—
MORE NEXT TIME.



ABOUT THIS time I manage to give a few friends the benefit of my presence. I did it last year. I have begun again.

My friend, Josslyn Dyke, is jealous of my other old friend, Boodels of Boodels. Josslyn Dyke complains that, whenever I *do* go anywhere, I always visit Boodels of Boodels *at* Boodels. The repartee is evident, "Then ask me, my dear Joss-

lyn. Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,"—which last quotation, by the way, is inscribed on a Cab-call presented to me on my

birthday. The instrument in question is pretty on a watch-chain, and amusing as a puzzle, but its practical working is a failure. It is, "Blow your whistle! I won't come to you, my lad!" This is merely *avis aux siffleurs*.

Josslyn Dyke replies, warmly, "Come the day after to-morrow."

This is sudden: but it is "now or never" with Josslyn. I am all for "now," and I accept.

"Capital!" says Josslyn, as heartily as before; "that's first-rate."

Then he pauses, and puts his head on one side, as if considering a difficulty. I make a pretence of being uninterested, but I own to a misgiving about his invitation. It was given readily, it was as readily accepted. It was offered carelessly; it was received with caution.

"Hum!" he says, dubiously, as if turning it over in his mind, "let me see—I'm going to the Thompson Bonhams on—ah——"

This sounds as though he were going to the Thompson Bonhams on the very day of my arrival. *But* I've accepted. *Ergo*: Put off the Thompson Bonhams. I make no observation, thinking it better for him to arrange his own affairs with himself, and leave mine to *myself*. *My* affair is that I am going down to stay with him, and, however he may treat the Thompson Bonhams, *I* am not going to be put off.

He goes on soliloquising—"Yes, let me see—if I don't go to them *then*—I can write and say that—yes—if you come down on Monday,"—I brighten up at this—I foresee a pleasant week—"Yes, if you come down on Monday—then I can go to the Thompson Bonhams on Thursday—that will suit you, eh?"

"Oh, yes," I reply, considerably damped by the sudden curtailment of my projected visit.

It seems as though he were calculating my cost per diem, or that it had suddenly occurred to him how tired he might possibly become of me in two days' time, and what a loophole was at once offered him by the Thompson Bonhams' engagement.

Josslyn Dyke, having concluded his soliloquy, and very nearly made his fixtures for the next few days, continues, as we walk along: "The fact is," he says, confidentially, "the country's

charming, delightful in the summer," he emphasises "summer" strongly, "when my house is full—lots of pretty people and pretty dresses, you know—and the birds are singing, and all the flowers are at their brightest and sweetest"—(quite a poet is Josslyn ! only I cannot avoid the thought that flashes across me, "If it were such a Paradise in summer, why the dence didn't he ask me there when there were, as he says, lots of pretty people and pretty dresses?" However, I'll keep this—I'll brood over it—till we have a cosy *tête-à-tête* in his snuggest of snug smoking-rooms), "but now," he goes on, "when all the leaves are falling, when the fogs rise and steal up the garden-walks like chilled ghosts of the past——"

"My dear fellow?" I remonstrate, "you're romancing. It can't be so bad as that." How about my bargain, and my pleasant time at his country house, if he's going to have foggy ghosts stealing up the garden-walks?

"O yes, it is," he insists. "You see, at four o'clock, one is only too glad to close the shutters, draw the curtains, put on the logs, light gas and candles everywhere we can, and keep out the shadows of the night and the sort of churchyard damp that will stream in through the chinks and crannies of the old house in spite of everything."

"Ah!" I say, endeavouring to divert him from his present gloomy line of thought. What's the matter with him? He is tall, rather a chubby-faced, or cherub-faced, man, guiltless of moustache and whisker except for a little bit that seems to have slipped down from under his hair on each side, and been fastened on flat with gum, and broad shoulders with just the slightest stoop. I have always heard of him as being, or as having been (and quite recently, too), dauntless as a lion in the cricket-field (a lion in the cricket-field would be the only dauntless one there, if the other dauntless ones had any sense—so it *is* a good simile after all), and a hero at lawn-tennis.

"Ah!" I exclaim, cheerily. "Yes, yours is an old house, a very old house, isn't it?"

"Yes," he begins. But I am afraid of his harking back to his former theme, and I cut him short with—

"I love an old house, whether in England or abroad!" I've

not seen very many anywhere, except when in process of demolition for "Metropolitan Improvements ;" but inference, and not accuracy, is the point when conversation has to be made. In fact, an originator of conversation should drop vague hints, calculating on the probable inferences to be drawn from them by his auditors, who will then keep up the interest for themselves. This process might be called the Inferential Calculus. This is a note by the way.

"I love old houses !" I go on enthusiastically. I feel I must be enthusiastically joyous with a man so depressed as Josslyn. Odd that he should be taken like this immediately after giving me my invitation. Is it repentance ? Regret ?

"An old house is so cheerful in winter," I say ; and here it occurs to me that I will give him a hint, and oppose ghosts with real flesh and blood—"I mean it is so lively, when there are about half-a-dozen pleasant people"—is half-a-dozen enough ? I ought to have asked more, and then he would have come down to that—I retrace my steps carefully—"half-a-dozen, or a dozen ; according, of course," I am careful to add, "to the size of the house. A few ladies to brighten up the scene. Then the chat round the fire"—somehow I can't get away from the fire. Whenever I begin with my ideal of the cheeriness of a country house in winter, the fire is the centre, as it were, of my system, and I invariably picture everybody sitting round it all day long, as though really afraid for their very lives to move away, lest they should be frozen to death, I leave this inference, however, for him ; *only*, as far as I've gone, my sketch does not present that idea of hearty joviality with which it had been my object to impress him. Sitting round a fire the whole day is more suggestive of a purring, sleepy, stupid state, than of rollicking country-house amusement. I determine to throw more spirit into my description, just to encourage him to ask some pleasant people ; for if he doesn't, and if he is going to be as gloomy as he is just now, I shall begin to regret I accepted Josslyn's invitation.

"Yes," I continue, "some lively people, all bright and cheery round the breakfast-table in the morning—the freshest, merriest meal of the day !"

"Ah !" he interrupts, "I hate breakfast in the morning !"

When would he have it then? In the evening?

No; he meant it seriously. He wouldn't, he says, have it at all. Personally, he doesn't have it for himself, only for his guests.

I am compelled, out of deference to my future host, to tone down this brilliant colouring at the commencement of the day, and go on to the next step.

"Well," I admit, as if convinced by his manner, more than his arguments, and in a general way deferring to his better sense and greater experience (always in view of him as my future host), "Well, there is something in what you say. A row and a noise in the morning is not good; it's exhausting. But then afterwards—the first pipe, for example, after breakfast—ah—ah!" and I try to represent, in action, what rapture is mine when smoking my first pipe in the morning.

"Ah!" says Josslyn, most seriously, "I detest smoking early in the morning; I only smoke at night: last thing."

"Indeed!" I exclaim; and for a few seconds I haven't anything further to say. I am a trifle shaken in my notions of the jollity of Josslyn as a companion; but I think it best to "go with him," so to speak, as far as I can, and (still in view of being my future host) by an effort I recover this blow—for it *is* a blow, when a man who is to be your host and companion, differs from you on such an essential point as the first pipe in the morning—and say—

"Well, possibly you're right—it suits *me*—but one can't legislate for others"—(I wish I could)—"but then that's not the only pleasure"—(and I quite pick up again as I begin to picture to myself a brilliant society at Josslyn's house)—"there are the Ladies"——

"Never look well in winter," he says, shaking his head, then adds—"and so difficult to get the right ones. Hate girls."

What age is Josslyn? I'll go and talk him over with a friend. At present my object is to show I'm the "Cornerless Man," who will fit in everywhere and anywhere.

[*Happy Thought*.—Capital name for a story, *The Cornerless Man*. Also, good idea for an Advertisement:—

WANTED, by a CORNERLESS MAN, several pleasant COUNTRY-HOUSES to stop at during the Winter Months. Hunting and Shooting quarters not so much an object as agreeable Society, and all found. No objection to travel in perfectly fine weather, and the sea like a lake.—Address C. M., Somebody Else's Chambers, No. 1 (which number he is at present engaged taking care of).]

"Yes," I own to Josslyn, "you are right. It is difficult to select exactly the people. But you have always plenty ready and willing to come down to *you*. Then"—(I go on with my ideal country-house and its joys)—"there's riding, or perhaps hunting, or a walk out and a drive back"—

"And *walk* back," he corrects me quickly, so that there should be no misunderstanding, no accepting on false expectations. "I don't keep any horses or carriages."

"No—but"—(I suggest, as possible)—"a pony-trap"—

"No trap at all," says Josslyn, decisively.

I am about to recover myself with greater difficulty this time, as I foresee *not* being met at the Station, which is an omission I detest, and am trying to pump up some fatuous remark about walking being better for the health, and so forth, when he takes up the conversation, and says—

"No; out of the summer, it's a very dull place, and I'm only too glad of anyone coming down to talk to me."

The deuce!

"But I shan't have any one else there, because if two fellows come, they talk to one another, and not to *me*; and they go out together, and leave me at home, because I don't walk much now. No;" he goes on becoming more contented with the prospects of my being down there alone, and, so to speak, in his power; "we will have the place to ourselves. It's an enormous old house. I shut up most of the rooms when there's nobody there, and occupy one; that'll be quite enough for *us*." "Oh, quite!" I say; but my heart fails me, and my mind misgives.

"You'll see what a strange, queer old ghostly place it is: some terrible legend to every room in the house. That's what you'll enjoy."

He is now quite lively again, as he bids me good-bye, and tells

me he shall certainly expect me the day after to-morrow. In answer to my question about the line and station, he informs me that I start from Fenchurch Street Station. Fenchurch Street! Oh! I almost exclaim. Couldn't he make it anywhere else? If there is a station I detest—but, no matter, it is too late now—I have accepted—and it mayn't be so far, after all,—only to begin with Fenchurch Street Station on a foggy, mizzly, dull, damp November afternoon—as a place to start from (better, in that aspect, thank Heaven! than as a place where we might be forced to stop!) is not an encouraging prospect.

“From Fenchurch Street,” he explains (and *he* thinks it a charming station; far better, he says, than Paddington, or St. Pancras, or Liverpool Street—oh! far better!—so much more convenient; yes, for where *he* wants to go) “you take the train”—or, more correctly speaking, the train takes me; for I couldn't take a train anywhere without making a dreadful mess of it—“the train takes you,” continues Josslyn, “to Bursted Mills. There you get out.”

“Yes: and take a fly for your place,” I say, with ready intelligence.

I am wrong, Josslyn explains. I do *not* take a fly. Does a fly take me? “No,” Josslyn replies, with such gravity, that I at once become seriously attentive. Another train comes up on a loop-line, and *that* takes me to Clogsole and Clayboro'; and this last is *his*, Josslyn Dyke's, Station.

I feel as glad as though I were there already.

“There is sure to be,” he informs me, “some one there to carry your bag”—he has evidently decided on the limit to my luggage, and my stay—“and if there isn't, you can walk up through the village; and I can send the Gardener down, if he hasn't gone away. But,” he adds, in a hopeful tone, “we'll manage—somehow.”

I detest this expression when applied to dealings with my bag. “Love me, love my bag,” is my motto as a traveller, and if I don't care about being treated “somehow,” much less do I like to think of my bag having to rough it in that sort of manner. After all, what am I without my bag? What is any man, travelling, without his bag? Absolutely nothing. And knowing this as well as

every one with any experience must do, nothing irritates me more, or more justly—as it should irritate every right-minded, honest, self-respecting person—than to hear a host, or a butler, or any servant, but specially a host, say carelessly, “Oh, your bag will be all right. It’ll come up *somehow*. And, *if it doesn’t*, we can easily send for it”——

No, I do not like this prospect as presented by Josslyn ; and from this moment I have one fixed determination for this visit, and that is, Not on any account to part with my Bag !

I reserve these remarks, and do not tell Josslyn how he has wounded a sensitive nature.

“And the name of your place—I forget exactly !” I ask.

“Here it is—on my card. I thought you knew,” he replies. “The Mote, Moss-End. It’s about three miles from the station.”

Happy Thought.—More Re-mote than Mote. But I musn’t venture on a jest about the name of a man’s place, where his forefathers and foremothers may have lived for centuries. But yet, wasn’t he disrespectful to my bag ? He won’t be when he sees it. *Boy* carry my bag, indeed ! I should like to see the Boy who could carry the bag that I’m going to take down with me to The Mote, Moss-End. That Boy would have to be a young Hercules. Josslyn little suspects that *in that bag of mine I can pack things sufficient to last me for three months at a time !* I’m an old carpet-bagger, and patent packing has been my study for years. But, he will see. I shall arrive—the Cornerless Man with the Carpet-Bag !

We part. And the day after to-morrow will see me—if the day after to-morrow only looks out sharp enough, and isn’t too foggy—down at The Mote, Moss-End, *chez* Josslyn Dyke. *Au revoir !*

CHAPTER II.

THE DISPIRITING JOURNEY—FOGS—MIST—FENS—DAMPNESS—LIGHT—
—MORE LIGHT—BURSTED MILLS—LANTERN—ONWARD—POOR
GHOST—SUSPICIONS—CLAYBORO'—BOUND FOR JOSSLYN'S—SUG-
GESTIONS FOR HEAD-WARMERS—THE FLY—ARRIVAL—THE KNELL
—SIGNS OF LIFE—OPEN LOCKS—THE RECEPTION—PRESENTI-
MENTS—REGRETS.



PRIZZLY, damp, and dirty at Fen-church Street Station. All along the line, misty, murky, and vapoury—such a vapour as ghosts might be made of—the ghosts of victims lost hopelessly in the fens. The gaslights struggling for life—gasping and shivering. If I could peer into the life of the fog, I am sure I should see Jack-o'-lanterns and unwholesome goblins dancing with frogs, toads, and other such slimy, grotesque creatures, familiar to the pencils of Doyle and Cruikshank.

The carriages appear damp, mouldy, and gloomy: all the passengers wear a mysterious air, as it seems to me, wrapping themselves up, and hiding themselves away in corners out of sight of one another, as though each, having committed some great crime, were escaping from justice, or, perhaps, the deed of darkness being still undone, each sombre passenger is bound for some lonely spot in the Fens, where the punctual victim will be met by appointment, and then—and then will be heard of no more!

Oh for the Electric Light all over the Essex Marshes, right away down to the river, to scare the ghosts, the goblins, and the murderous prowlers of the night! Wake up, Mr. Edison, and start land lighthouses, here, to begin with. Hang the expense!—do it, Sir! Ruin yourself, and receive the gratitude of thousands of poor trembling belated travellers.

Bursteds Mills Station! More like an outlying shed for homeless cattle in the midst of the Great Dismal Swamp. A shivering porter, very damp, and very sniffing, is holding his lantern under his jacket, with his arm affectionately round it, as though to keep it warm, and perhaps by this means impart some additional life to his own pulsation. Hiding his light under a bushel, as it were.

He regards me with pity, and evidently wonders what on earth can have induced me to get out at Bursteds Mills.

The train for Clogsole and Clayboro' is waiting, and there are two other ghosts besides myself going by it.

We get into our compartments silently, avoiding one another. The train starts noiselessly. No bustle, no screaming, no life. The wheels are muffled, and the rails have been oiled by the greasy fog, for we glide along into a deeper and deeper gloom, and the curtains of mist close around us and behind us, deadening all sound, and gradually shutting us out from the outer world.

I am wondering what evil genius prompted me to accept Josslyn Dyke's invitation to his country-house at this time of year! But 'tis done! May I arrive safely!

We stop at Clogsole. Somebody gets out. I arrive at the fact by listening attentively. I can just see a shadowy figure—a melancholy shade. He becomes merged in the fog, like the shadow that used to stand behind the Haunted Man's chair in the Adelphi drama,—and then he disappears,—perhaps burked on the spot, robbed, and rolled over into a muddy ditch outside Clogsole Station—to be left till called for. And when will he be called for? Alas! poor ghost!

In the old days of murderous romances and thrilling melodramas, it used to be the innkeeper, or the miller, who gave his victims shelter for the night, when their fate was sealed. In these days of steam-travelling, can it be that the civil station-master has

taken the place of the black-browed host of the Roadside Inn, or of *Grindoff* the miller?

Clayboro' Station. I dread getting out. I look cautiously round. I descend. No porter. Nobody. I hear a voice, somewhere in the night air, sighing out sadly, "Clayboro'"—that is all.

My luggage—that is, my Wonderful Bag is with me. The phantom train glides away, and vanishes in a flash of fire: then all is darkness on the Line. I am alone, with my bag, on the platform. At last a glowworm porter advances to take my ticket. I tell him I am bound for Mr. Josslyn Dyke's, The Mote, Moss-End. By an effort of memory, as though unaccustomed to conversation, he recalls, after some hesitation, the name of the house and its owner. I fancy he regards me suspiciously, as though I might be a detective in disguise, and Josslyn of The Mote a coiner.

I am inclined to re-assure him by protesting I mean no harm to Josslyn Dyke, that I am his warmest friend, that is, if in these parts there can be such a thing as a warm friend, unless he go about in bearskins three deep, with coals of fire heaped on his head like the itinerant roast chestnut vendors in the London streets—which has always struck me as a wonderful invention for keeping one's head warm.

[*Happy Thought*.—We have foot-warmers, why not "head-warmers?" Strange that this fashion in our climate should not be more generally adopted. No need to sell chestnuts; merely a hatfull of coals, lighted by the servant when you go out. The "New patent iron hat for keeping the head warm in winter,"—is a brilliant idea. Might write, on this subject too, to Mr. Edison. He'd work it up into something. Only *I* register it first. The New Patent Coalhole Hat, invaluable for lightness and warmth. No brushing required.]

Fortunately there *is* a fly. This is a rare bit of luck. Josslyn Dyke hadn't sent it. It has come to take somebody else somewhere else, and the somebody else's heart has evidently failed him at the last minute, as he hasn't arrived, and can't now for another two hours. With my bag I take my seat in the fly, and cheer up a bit. No matter to me, now, that the fly has a nasty odour of

damp hay—no-matter to me that the doors are warped and close with difficulty—no matter that one window won't come up and the other won't go down, and that it rattles, and shakes, and wobbles. These are no discomforts to me *now*, for I am spared a dirty walk, and saved, perhaps, from losing myself, and losing everything else, it might be, bag included, on the lonely road between the station and The Mote.

I can see nothing of the country, and very little of the village. It *is* a village. I can make out the straggling, dimly-lighted shops of the general-dealers, and we nearly bump up against some waggons standing out in the road in front of the old village inn. There is some shouting, not much, and some bad language—the latter stronger than the shouting, and more of it,—and we continue our route. More and more vapoury and misty. Danker and damper.

[*Happy Thought*.—Capital name for an *opéra bouffe*, *Danker and Damper*. Musical, of course—with Mlle. D'Anka as the heroine. Great blessing to be able to have even one flash of a “happy thought” in such surroundings as these.]

Faint, flickering, bilious-looking lamps, at intervals, the posts being invisible. The trap takes a turn to the left, then another to the right, then to the left again : and then I couldn't swear whether it is turning right or left, or whether we are curving round and round, and travelling in a circle. All I am sure of is, that we are not going straight : and at times I could almost positively swear that we are going backwards. Wherever The Mote may ultimately be, the road to it seems to be through a labyrinth of lanes ; and, to judge by the jolting, we are passing over deep ruts, or old water-courses.

At last we pull up. I can see absolutely nothing. Can I have arrived at Nowhere, the country residence of Mr. Nobody ? I know that in crowded London, Josslyn Dyke would probably be Nobody ; but here in the country I thought he would be Somebody. Nobodies in London, are, more often than not, Somebodies in the country.

The Flyman has descended, and, as far as I can make out, is trying to climb up a pole. Good Heavens ! is this the way into

Josslyn Dyke's house? No; he isn't trying to climb: he is only fumbling about a door-post to find a bell.

Becoming accustomed to the darkness, I see that we are close up against a high, and, as it seems to me, *black* wall.

[*Happy Thought*.—Good omen. Arriving at Blackwall. Used not Blackwall to be famous for its dinners?]

We are between two black walls, and under heavy, over-hanging branches. A large, massive gateway looms gradually out from the wall, slowly taking form, shape, and colour, like a change in a dissolving view. Then, too, I become aware of a house, at some little distance off—an old gabled house—and, as I think, a tower.

The Flyman has discovered the bell-chain by the mere accident of the iron handle hitting him on the nose, which makes him, not unnaturally, angry, but sets him to pulling at it with the vigour of an irritable person suffering under a sense of injury, and determined to “let 'em have it” whoever they are.

But it takes three pulls to produce one sound.

[*Happy Thought*.—Idea for a “Sound Table,”—with my compliments to the “Ancient Society of College Youths,” or whatever the scientific bell-ringers call themselves,—on the plan of any other table of weights and measures. And why not? There is such a thing as a “measured tone,” and how will the ordinary dealer measure it, if not by rule, *i.e.*, by table. I don't see my way to the proportions except starting with—

Three pulls (at a bell).....	make	One sound.
Two sounds	Somebody hear.
Somebody hearing	makes	No difference.
No difference.....	„	One angry.]

But these are details merely suggested at Josslyn Dyke's door, by the fact of the Flyman having rung several solemn knells—and the bell only knells once solemnly to every three good hard pulls—without any result. It really appears as if the people within, on hearing the knell, had gone quietly off and buried themselves. I have often heard of persons “burying themselves in the country,” but never knew it was done in this way before.

I mention this jestingly to the Flyman, who doesn't understand the humour of the thing, and is inclined to fancy I am chaffing

him. However, as he has his fare in view, and an extra sixpence for bell-ringing, he does not retort on me: but he is doing anything but "blessing the bell" at that moment.

Lights! The sounds of life! Bolts, locks, and bars are flying asunder! Chains rattle as though a hundred persons were being let loose out of the Bastille. More bolts, locks, and bars. More chains. Then the deep baying of a hound from somewhere. *Where?* It occurs to me that if this basso-profondo hound is the watch-dog, he must be rather useless, seeing that he took no notice of our arrival, and had to be roused by the bell before he uttered a sound.

However, that's Dyke's affair, not mine; all that concerns me about the hound with the bass growl just now is—*where is he at this minute?* I can't see him; and I hate to hear an invisible dog.

The outer portal—it *is* a portal—opens,—of its own accord. Through it, I see a line of light leading to a doorway, where stands a tall figure, holding a lantern, and peering out cautiously. Then the tall figure advances, gravely.

Associating his appearance—he is in black, and a stiff white tie—with the funereal knell that has just sounded, I cannot help looking upon him as an undertaker attached to the establishment. He advances upon me, holding his lantern aloft, as though he were searching for a body—as an undertaker might be expected to do if he had lost one in the snow; and then for the first time I perceive behind him a huge St. Bernard mastiff. This completes the picture of finding the body in the snow (only there's no snow, but plenty of glistening dead leaves), and he ceases to represent an undertaker, but a monk of St. Bernard turned Protestant, and dressed as a clergyman of the Evangelical school. It is Josslyn Dyke's butler: and—thank Heaven!—this is Josslyn Dyke's!

Joyfully I bestow *largesse* on the Flying Bellringer—I mean the Bellringing Flyman; and, after making friends with the dog, who sniffs about me to assure himself of my being the sort of person he would recommend his master to admit, I surrender my bag—*my* bag of bags—to the care of the butler, and, without another word from him to me, or from me to him—it is all done silently, in dumb show, like a ballet in plain clothes—and there is an air of mystery about, as if I were the last conspirator to arrive, and had

kept the others waiting—I follow the butler and the bag into the Hall.

[*Happy Thought* (title for song).—The Butler and the Bag.]

In another second there is a pattering of feet on the dark oak floor, and two dogs suddenly appear, stop short, and glower at me suspiciously. They are weird-looking creatures, both of them. The first, a trifle in advance of the other, has a large goblinesque head with great goggly eyes, awkward overgrown legs, long tawny body, and a tail that writhes and twists like an eel. Were I asked, at haphazard, to fix his breed, I should say something between a bulldog, a pug, and a grotesque Chinese ornament, the last factor in his composition predominating. The other dog is, as far as I can make out, white, thin, and long pointed at both ends like a double pencil. It is an unsubstantial dog, and strikes me as a phantom animal: the first is a fiend. They do not utter a sound or move. On my left stands the austere Butler and the St. Bernard. None of us move or utter a sound. It is a tableau. Enter upon this picture, my friend Josslyn Dyke who steps forward, greeting me cordially but solemnly.

"Dinner," he says, gravely, "will be ready in half an hour. We dine punctually. Gool will show you your room. If you want anything, ask Gool: he will see to you."

Gool is the Butler—a Phantom Butler!—lank, dark, and pale, and solemn as a mute, when officially engaged, standing silently, and moving noiselessly!

[*Happy Thought* (*paraphrasing a well-known line*).—Moving noiselessly—"An excellent thing in Butlers."]

Gool inclines his head, and motions me to follow him up the broad old dark-pannelled staircase. It is a ballet in plain clothes. I express my willingness to accompany him also in dumb show. There ought to be music.

Josslyn somehow vanishes. The dogs have all vanished. I never saw or heard them go.

The place is dimly lighted, and there are black shadows lying in wait in every corner, as though to pounce out on the venturesome stranger.

More ballet. Serious *pas de deux* between myself and the Butler on the landing.

I am depressed. I am nervous. I wish I were at home, anywhere, in the centre of London, or at my Club, before the fire . . . but it is all too late . . . Fate has pronounced . . . and I follow the Phantom Butler with the Bag.



CHAPTER III.

AT JOSSLYN DYKE'S—THE HOUSE—PASSAGE—STAIRS—CLOCK—BOGIE
 CORNERS—PHANTOM BUTLER—CHAMBER—PORTRAIT—APPARI-
 TION—DOWN AGAIN—A SURPRISE—TO BE EXPLAINED IN OUR
 NEXT.



IT IS a solemn, silent house, this of Josslyn Dyke's. Oak panellings, casement windows in deep recesses. Doors in all sorts of unexpected places. The house appears to have been built by some architect who has gone mad on dark corners.

It seems as if this architect had said to himself in drawing his plan, "Now, look here, we'll have a great big staircase leading to a dark corner halfway up to the first floor; then the second part of the staircase shall finish at

a landing where there are nothing but dark corners."

The architect must have chuckled over this idea. No one remembers his name, but it is supposed that he "flourished" in the Elizabethan period. Flourished is a good word, if it were not suggestive of the question, "What did he flourish?" Was it his stick with a handkerchief tied to the end of it, to express joy on finishing his work? Or was it his hat? Or did he simply flourish, not like a green bay-tree, but as a great bay-window, which would be more appropriate to him as an architect?

However, no matter how he flourished, or when, certain it is that he must have been a man of infinite humour in his design for The Mote, Mossend, which was apparently built with a view to the accommodation of a large family of Little Jack Horners, who could, with smallest possible chance of observation, sit in various corners, eating a corresponding number of Christmas pies.

Happy Thought for a Christmas book. *The Horner Family*. By a "Corner Man." In a Horner-mental cover, price, &c.

After this one flight of stairs, which leads up to the first floor, Gool, the Phantom Butler, glides before me with my bag and a candle, along a narrow strip of carpet.

At the end of this passage something looms out upon us which strikes me, at first, as not unlike a pump, without the handle.

Nearer approach shows it to be a gaunt, melancholy, yet military-looking, clock. It bears a fanciful resemblance to a highly-finished sentry-box in dark wood, with a front door to it, which the sentry could lock after him when he felt cold, and went in. If he opened it now and stepped out, I don't think I should be very much surprised. I am sure Gool wouldn't be. If goblin Jack Horners are in all the dark corners, eating phantom Christmas pies—goblin' goblins—then there is another phantom Jack-in-the-box, in the sentry-box, who comes out perhaps when the clock sounds midnight. Involuntarily I take out my watch to compare London time with what they accept as the correct thing down here, so as to accommodate myself to my host's views in regard to punctuality at meals.

But the clock's face gives me no information. It is a yellowish complexion, which, being of metal, was once, perhaps, as bold as brass, but now the numbers are almost illegible, except the ten and the two, which form a pair of eyes on either side of a little round discoloured button of a nose, from which depend, at two acute angles, left and right, two straight dark lines, really the hands, which have the appearance of moustachios of the same period as the house—*i.e.*, the Elizabethan.

"That clock, Sir," observes Gool the butler, solemnly, in answer to my inquiry—"that clock never tells the time. It never has done, since *I've* been here." He says it with pride, and with a touch of sympathy in his voice, that makes him, for a second,

almost human, at all events a trifle less ghostly. I notice, afterwards, that when Josslyn speaks of his clock he does so in the same tone of affectionate pride, as one would do of a superannuated servant who had done his work in his day, and had become a pensioner of the family.

"No, Sir," says a footman afterwards coming upon me suddenly (everyone comes across everyone else suddenly in Josslyn Dyke's house, they are all surprise passages), while I am examining this clock; examining, but not consulting it any more than I should think of consulting a nonagenarian physician who had lost his memory—"no, Sir. You can never get the time from that clock. We always take it from the one in the hall or the kitchen. The little one in the dining-room ain't much use; it goes well enough, but it generally gets very fast."

Of course, the little one in the dining-room is scarcely fifteen years old. A giddy thing, bright and Frenchified (the gift of some kind friend who wanted to brighten up the general gloominess of *The Mote*), a go-a-head sort of fellow, a kind of clock that never pays in the end, always tick, tick, tick, always fast, thoroughly unprincipled, never to be relied on for a moment, much less for an hour.

But the old Clock on the Stairs that never *will* tell the time! *That keeps its own counsel in its own case!* That not by sound, or sign, ever lets out its secret. That watches everything and says nothing! Why is this clock silent? Did it neglect to speak once, on some fearfully important occasion, when its voice ought to have forbidden the banns of marriage, and, as the penalty, had ever afterwards to hold its tongue? I must ask Josslyn Dyke about this clock. Proceed, Gool, this confidential clock interests me much.

Through a small door into a narrow passage. Through another small door, and on to another staircase. More doors, more corners, dimly lighted by one gas jet shining through a pale green medium. One more door. My chamber.

Our entrance with the candle seems to disperse the shadows which were gathered about the hearth, as if the superior Phantom Butler had said "Come! No loitering about here! It won't do, you know! Move on! No hanging about and

haunting here, 'cos I won't have it"—and I become aware of the presence of a cheerful fire, in—for the architect couldn't resist the temptation even here—in a dark corner. The dog-grate is in a deep tiled recess—the back is coal black—the tiles are smoked black—the woodwork about is almost black—the dog-irons are black—and as the fire is the very model of a fire for roasting chestnuts by, there being no flame—it sheds a glow which has a warm and cheerful appearance, but which fails in reaching a single corner.

There are two candles on the dressing-table, which Gool lights; but twenty of the best wax wouldn't illuminate this room satisfactorily.

A casement window in a deep recess. Dark and draughty. Old faded brown, Scotch snuff-coloured curtains, which have had a serious quarrel, and won't meet, despite all attempts at reconciliation on the part of friendly intervention. Pitch dark outside.

The bed is enormous, and funereal, reminding me of a lying-in-state. There are four dark, sturdy, posts, and six dingy, heavy curtains; a patchwork coverlet, of many colours, as though they'd caught and killed a poor old faded Harlequin, and had stuffed his skin for this purpose; a large pillow, and watch-pockets for two, pinned on to a sort of patternless tapestry back-ground.

Gool unpacks for me: sees that everything is ready, and then becoming absorbed into the deep shadow, he melts away suddenly, and disappears—through the door, I suppose; but the door is invisible, and his movements were inaudible, so that I couldn't swear positively, in a court of justice, to either the means or manner of his exit.

A languor steals over me. I should like to sleep before the fire, if there were a comfortable chair, or to go straight to bed, then and there. This influence is so strong on me, that I surprise myself in the act of unconsciously winding up my watch.

This discovery causes me to pull myself together, and rouse myself for a supreme effort.

The supreme effort is taking off my coat. After which I stare vacantly at the fire, and then, reversing my position, I stare at

the bed. Then I wonder what the room was originally used for ; then becoming more accustomed to the light, such as it is, I am suddenly startled by seeing what, on the instant, appears to me to be somebody looking at me through a hole up above the wainseot, on the wall opposite the side of the bed furthest from the window.

Of course in another second I am aware of its being a picture. The old stories recur to me of the top of the bed slowly descending, as the picture gradually disappears from view ; of the concealed assassin watching his victim through the portrait's eyes ; and I am compelled to take a candle, and examine the painting closely. I say to myself, "I wonder whom it's by?" I look for the name of the artist. Then I say to myself, "I suppose it's a portrait." Then I get on a chair so as to place myself *vis-à-vis* with the face of this grim-looking Spaniard in black doublet and ruff, and once more I soliloquise, "queer-looking old chap"—but somehow in speaking of him in this manner, I feel inclined to beg his pardon for the liberty, and to account for it as a *lapsus lingue*, caused by my nervousness on the introduction. I *wish* to look on it, and speak of it, and think of it, as a work of art, and as a curiosity ; but, somehow, though I have taken the greatest pains to put myself on a familiar footing with the picture, I feel the picture has got the better of me, and though as I wash my hands, I say to myself in a vague sort of dashing incredulous way, "How absurd ! ridiculous ! Ha ! ha ! ha !"—yet I can't help looking over my shoulder to see if anything has happened, and if the picture, or rather the three-quarter man *in* the picture is still where he was.

[*Happy Thought*.—Three-quarter man. No legs. But even this doesn't entirely reassure me, as I have an uncanny sort of feeling that legs are, so to speak, "no object to him," if he once took it into his head (which he *has* got) to come down, and have a look round.]

A bell rings solemnly from some part of the house. Dinner, I suppose. I hurry on with my dressing, but from time to time I cast a glance at the picture to see what *he's* doing.

I am startled by a sepulchral voice saying, "Are you ready, Sir?"

It is the apparition of Gool. He has come, like the statue of the *Commendatore* in *Don Giovanni*, to take me below to dinner.

It has occurred to Josslyn Dyke that I may not be able to find my way, and he has despatched Gool to be my guide.

Phantom Butler, I come to dinner. Alas, poor Ghost ! lead on, I follow.

I expect the evening will be awfully slow and dull.

What do I hear ?

Voices ? Merriment in the distance ? ° Impossible !

Gool throws open a door in a corner,—always a corner,—leading out of a dark passage.

And I see before me . . . I can hardly believe my eyes.



CHAPTER IV.

THE SURPRISE—A PARTY—RECOGNITION—DESCRIPTION—CATALOGUE
—OLDEST OF OLD COUNTIES—THE BEAUTY—INTRODUCTION—
MAUVAIS QUART D'HEURE—ETIQUETTE—MORE SOLEMNITY—
DINNER IN STATE.



I HAD expected Josslyn Dyke to be alone, and, to my utter astonishment, find myself suddenly thrust in, as it were, on a comparatively large party, that, apparently, hadn't in the least expected me to be added to their number.

The rapidity with which I have been let in, and the door closed behind me, seems something like a practical joke on the part of the Phantom Butler.

Nobody takes the slightest notice of me, except two or three Ladies, who look round as much as to say, "What's this?" and after an inspection so brief as scarcely to interrupt their conversation for a second, they seem to say, "Oh, is *that* all—well, as we were saying," and they resume their talk. Awkward.

My host is engaged with a tall, elderly, crusty-looking Gentleman by the fire-place. The Crusty Gentleman has taken up the usual peculiarly Englishman's attitude in front of the fire, so as to render himself more crusty than ever. He is doing himself to a

turn—[*Happy Thought*.—Doing himself a good turn. Charity begins at home, *i.e.* at your own fireside]—sometimes with great impartiality presenting a side view to the fire, and sometimes turning right round while conversing with Josslyn Dyke, so that in time, the Crusty Old Gentleman will be thoroughly done through. Whatever the engrossing subject may be, Josslyn is saying, “it *is*,” and the Crusty one is “begging his pardon, and assuring him that it *isn’t*.”

I only see one face I know. It belongs to a man whom I meet, occasionally, once in two years, but as Josslyn is evidently not going to introduce me to anybody, and as, without this ceremony, I can’t address anyone, even about the weather, without being considered ill-bred, I go straight up to the face I know, and say heartily, “Ah! how are you?” He is in the middle of a discussion on the latest news of the day with a tall, hazy-eyed man, with an eye-glass that he can’t fix for more than a second at a time, and whose expression is something so between a laugh and a cry, as to convey the idea of his having taken his wine before dinner, instead of having that pleasure to come.

The gentleman whom I recognize, stares at me, then exclaims, “Ah! how *are* you!” in a surprised way, implying that, had politeness permitted, he would have added, “And *who* the deuce are you?”

Then follows the usual stupid pause, and the usual nervous laugh. We are both trying to remember where we saw each other last, and what we know of one another, if anything.

We discover, to our mutual relief, that there is no deception; that we did meet at the Shalluses, about a year or so ago; which leads us to inquire of one another what has become of the Shalluses, as if they’d been hanged, or sold up, or transported in the mean time. Neither of us knows what *has* become of the Shalluses; and here the conversation would come to a standstill, but for the hazy-eyed man, who evidently resents my interruption, and attracts my acquaintance’s attention with, “By the way, Hoshford”—ah! that’s his name, Hoshford, of course—“I was going to ask just now,” which implies that he would have asked him, if I hadn’t come up and interrupted,—“whether you ever got a satisfactory reply from the Serjeant about the terms of the

lease?" This is so pointed a hint, as to their conversation up to the moment I had "intervened"—like a Queen's Proctor—having been peculiarly private and confidential, that I cannot avoid feeling myself "not in it," and so turn away, hoping either that Josslyn will introduce me to some one, or that dinner will be announced, or that there is a photograph-book that I can examine.

I survey the company. Another face I recognize—a man whom I've seen, generally at luncheon-time, at the Club for years; never ascertained his name, and never seen him speaking to any one. I remember having been informed that this was a Country Member who lived some distance from town, and who apparently only came up at luncheon-time, and then went back again. I doubted it then; now I believe it to be true. He advances towards me, and observes, cheerfully, "I think we ought to know one another!" I respond to the sentiment with much cordiality. At the same time, I wonder if, after this, we shall do more than bow distantly for the remainder of our lives, except when on another similar occasion bringing us again together, we shall make the same remark.

I ask him if he knows many people here, which question implying that he doesn't, rather depreciates the value of his friendly greeting. He replies, "No; not everybody."

At this moment Josslyn Dyke comes up to me, and with an air of the deepest mystery, says, "I want you to take Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne in to dinner."

Of course I reply, "that nothing I could possibly have imagined would give me greater pleasure than to take Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne in to dinner," and I look round to see which *is* Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne. There are two old Ladies by the fire chatting together; one with a conspicuously false brown front, and the other with a most festive cap; and I do hope that neither of these is Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne.

Josslyn Dyke relieves my mind by saying, sadly—he generally speaks sadly as though he were reluctantly fulfilling some painful duty—

"You know her, don't you?"

"No, I don't think——."

He murmurs in my ear with melancholy emphasis

"Great beauty. Everybody about here been going mad after her. Widow. Very rich. Very old county family. Come!"

I am overawed by this description, and almost begin to wish that the introduction had been, after all, to one of those two old Ladies by the fire,—even to the one in the festive cap.

I delay him for a moment to ask who all the people are. Josslyn explains them to me as if they were catalogued figures in a waxwork exhibition. "That old Gentleman there, talking to Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne, is Mr. Rendlesham of Pikley—very old county family—the old Lady with a cap is Mrs. Aysford Synge of The Wick, near here, one of the oldest families in the county"—and it occurs to me one of the oldest Ladies in the county too—"and," I ask, "the other funny old Lady with the"—I am just going to add, "evident false front"—when he interrupts me gravely, "That is my aunt, Mrs. Tupton, who is staying here"—very glad I didn't say any more. He continues, "Hoshford, you know."

"He's not an old county family, is he?" I ask, incredulously, having hitherto only associated him with London.

"Yes, very old county family. Hoshford came over with the Aysford Synges." I thought he was going to say "with the Conqueror." "The tall man with the eye-glass is Henry Sandilands, a very old friend of mine." Glad I didn't venture on any personal remark about *him*. "The thin elderly Gentleman with the bald head is Aysford Synge, of The Wick—and the stout man he's talking to is Pelkin Wadd, an ex-Master in Chancery."

I remark that I once knew a Wadd family in Sussex.

Josslyn resents this. I had evidently no business to know a Wadd family in Sussex, who, apparently, were impostors, as these, the Pelkin Wadds, have no relations anywhere out of this county—in fact, never been out of Dampshire. It occurs to me that the Pelkin Wadds resemble the Christy Minstrels, who never perform out of St. James's Hall—and that all the other Wadds are counterfeits. I wonder what the other Wadds say to this. It appears that I am among the representatives of all the oldest county families. Quite a gathering of the Clans. Josslyn's serious and impressive manner seems to imply that he feels what a responsibility he has incurred by bringing together this valuable collection

of old county families. After going through the catalogue I almost expect him to add, "Please not to touch the figures."

There is age upon them all except Hoshford and Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne, the former looking younger than he really is (I've known him by sight for years), and the latter looking, it strikes me, older than she really is ; but still a Beauty.

A sudden shyness comes over me. But it is too late. I am led up to Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne. She is a fine, handsome, lustrous-eyed lady in black velvet, much lace, and sparkling diamonds, a flaming crimson cap of satin, all crumpled as if some one had been sitting on it by accident, and white gloves, with about sixteen buttons, up to her elbows.

She is seated, and still engaged in conversation with the Crusty Elderly Gentleman,—Rendlesham of Pikley.

If there is one ceremony more awkward than another, it is that of introduction to the person you are to take in to dinner. To begin with : it's not the choice of either party : your host is the providence for the occasion. Then you know nothing of one another ; you are utterly ignorant as to whether there is between you any similarity of tastes, or some agreement of opinion. Perhaps one may dislike everything the other fancies, and *vice versa*. Then the necessity of introduction seems to imply to the Lady, "Look here ! You won't have any dinner unless *he* takes you in, because you can't go in alone." And much the same to the Gentleman, who is made responsible for his companion's enjoyment during the remainder of the evening.

The introduction is completed, Josslyn Dyke (who is really one of the gravest, and, ordinarily, one of the most sensible men in the world) stupidly adding, on leaving us, as a recommendation of me to her favour, "He'll amuse you, Mrs. Byrne," whereat The Beauty slightly elevates her dark eyebrows, and brings to bear on me the full power of her electric lustrous eyes, as though expecting to see me do something to amuse her on the spot, there and then. Stand on my head perhaps, or swallow a paper-knife and bring it out of my right ear. I know men who *can* do this, and, conversation failing, I envy them the accomplishment.

[*Happy Thought*.—Must learn tricks with cards. Carry a pack in my pocket, and, on being introduced, come to business at once

with the question, "Take a card—look at it: you're sure you'll know it again?" &c. This would start a subject of conversation between two utter strangers, and do away with all the wearisome twaddle about the weather and the news.

However, as I haven't matured this plan, I can only protest feebly against Josslyn Dyke's remark. But he doesn't stay to listen to it.]

I would protest, but Josslyn Dyke has gone.

I can only smile, inanely. I am painfully conscious of the utter inanity of the smile, and say,

"Well, it rather——"

But I don't get any further, as Old Crusty—I mean old Rendlesham of Pikley—resumes his conversation at the point where he had dropped it, and Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne turns her head towards him and away from me, so that I can only stand before them and listen to what they have to say to one another, which is all about *their* county matters, which, as I am utterly ignorant on the subject, have no sort of interest for *me*. I don't like to go away, I don't like to stop. If there were a chair at hand, sitting-down would give me some occupation.

I am nervously aware of Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne's observing me out of the corner of her eye. Perhaps at this moment I am fulfilling my mission, and amusing her. I wish old Old Crusty would retire.

The announcement of dinner breaks up the groups, and I have to offer my arm to Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne.

Which arm?

[*Happy Thought.*—Watch my host, Josslyn Dyke, and see which arm he gives.]

I could have sworn I saw him give his right arm. I give mine. Immediately afterwards I find I am the only person who has given his right arm. Perhaps giving the left arm is one of the ancient customs of the oldest county families. I apologize. Shall we change? Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne appears a little annoyed at the awkwardness. Our changing arms involves a delay of the procession, which is arranged on some principle of county precedence, which in my ignorance I violate by stepping gaily before old Pelkyn Wadd, the ex-Master in Chancery, with Mrs. Tupton, Josslyn's false-fronted Aunt, on his arm.

Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne says, seriously, in an undertone to me, "They'll never forgive me for this. We're out of our place."

I try to reassure her by replying cheerfully that "we shall soon be in our right place," meaning at dinner, but she evidently regards this as levity, and the procession moves, silently and solemnly, into the dining-room, where for a time, but only for a time, the gloom of *The Mote* would have entirely disappeared, but for the sombre pictures on the walls, and the impossibility, even here, with all the candles—"the thousand additional lamps"—of throwing any gleam of light into the dark bogie corners of this old Elizabethan dining-room,—and but for, above all, the presence of Gool, the Phantom Butler, and his carefully-selected band of Old Country Waiters.



CHAPTER V.

DINNER-PARTY—OLD COUNTY PEOPLE—NO CHANCE—OUT OF IT—
DESCRIPTION — HAPPY THOUGHTS — APPLES — POTATOES — ANI-
MATED DISCUSSION—INTERESTING—POTATO TOPICS—DEARTH—
SADNESS—DESPAIR—DIFFERENCE OF OPINION—SUDDEN CHANGE
—SOMETHING NEW—“OLD COUNTY PEOPLE.”



SOON discover, that, for thoroughly enjoying the conversation at Josslyn Dyke's table, I ought to have belonged to an Old County family. It being impossible to be elected as a Member of an Old County

family on the spot, I am obliged to content myself with trying to interest myself in whatever subject Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne is conversing about with Josslyn Dyke on her left, or attempting to beguile her into interesting herself in *me*.

I dare say, that, apart from the Old County set, Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne would be delightful. But as one of the Old County set, and mixed up in it, she seems unable to speak on any but Old County topics.

Mrs. Tupton, with the evident false front, Josslyn Dyke's Aunt,

keeps up quite an animated discussion on kindred matters on my right : Hoshford and Miss Aysford Syngé are, so to speak, in the same swim. I can't swim, with this stream at least ; and so, figuratively, I sit on the bank watching the others, and wishing for some subject to be started that shall be as a touch of nature to make the whole world kin. This means, on reflection (for I have plenty of time to reflect), that I want something to be started that I can talk about. In fact, I'm not quite sure, after my enforced silence, whether I shouldn't be glad to have all the talk to myself.

My one chance is with Hoshford, whom I had recognized as an acquaintance, whose life I had fondly imagined had been passed chiefly in London, and who therefore would be at home on congenial matters. Not a bit. He is at this moment eloquent upon the merits of some archery parties and pic-nics, given by some well-known Old County People in the past summer : and he and Miss Aysford Syngé are comparing notes about the flirtations that took place on those occasions, the marriages that are on the tapis, the probability of the Fourth Light Something succeeding the Thirteenth Heavy Somethingelses at the garrison town, and the particular advantages or disadvantages of that change of military contingent to this part of the county.

Miss Syngé is a washed-out young Lady—a sort of “symphony,” in no colour in particular. She is not exactly tall, nor lanky, nor gawky, but long—a symphony in neutral tint, a note of Whistler's long drawn out. Had I met her in one of the obscure passages on The Mote, I should have taken her for the Resident Ghost.

[*Happy Thought (all to myself, having no one to say it to).*—Why is The Mote like one of Mr. Robert Browning's poems ! Because it's full of obscure passages. Remember this, and ask it presently. Only if Mr. Robert Browning doesn't happen to belong to one of their own Old County families, I don't think there's much chance of my conundrum being appreciated.]

Mr. Pelkin Wadd, the ex-Master in Chancery, at the other end of the table, is talking about the state of the roads and labourers' cottages with Mr. Aysford Syngé, while Mr. Sandilands' conversation is entirely about fishing, in which Mrs. Aysford Syngé appears to be deeply interested.

There are only two subjects which seem, for a short time, to unite them all—one is Apples, and the other Potatoes.

I think I may venture on Apples. I try it with Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne, while for one moment there is a break in her conversation with Josslyn.

"Is this a great apple-growing county?" I ask, with the deeply interested air of an inquirer into statistics.

"Well," she replies, with rather a defiant manner, apparently resenting my question as an impertinent curiosity about county matters that cannot possibly concern *me*, "this is *not* a cider country."

"Oh," I say, glad to find that I have succeeded in starting a subject for both of us, and beginning to feel for the first time that I have, as it were, at least a small stake in the county; "not like Devonshire, then?"

"Oh, not in the least!" she returns, with a supercilious smile, and turning the light of her eyes full on to me as though she were detecting an impostor, she adds, emphatically, "not in the least bit like Devonshire!"

If I yielded to impulse, for the mere sake of keeping up the conversation, I should immediately rejoin, "Oh! then there's no cream?" But, fortunately, this subtle remark of mine is prevented by Hoshford, who, addressing her from the opposite side of the room, observes,—“I hear it's been a bad apple-year with you, Mrs. Byrne?" This brings up Mr. Rendlesham of Pikley, and then all the others.

Rendlesham says, despairingly, "I can't get apples anywhere," as if he had lived on them all his life, and would die within a very short time if the supply wasn't kept up.

Every one pities Mr. Rendlesham.

Mr. Synge wishes he had kept *his* apples till now. This sounds as if he regrets not having brought a lot of them in his pocket to eat himself, and let friends have a few bites. Unfortunately it appears he sold them early at a very low figure. His tone is that of a man whom ruin is staring in the face.

Sandilands asserts, with the air of a man who is giving up life as one grand mistake altogether, that *he* had offered a fabulous sum per bushel for apples, but couldn't get them.

Dyke wishes he had known this last week, as he sent his last up to London and only got a very poor price for them.

"It's been the same with potatoes," observes Pelkin Wadd.

"Worse!" remarks Sandilands, moodily.

"Have your potatoes been bad, Mr. Sandilands?" asks Mrs. Byrne, in a tone of intensely sympathising pity, leaning forward, and looking down the table at him.

Sandilands replies that "he really can't get a potato."

This is said with such an utter abandonment of all hope of ever getting a potato here or hereafter, that I wonder Josslyn Dyke doesn't order Gool to put up whatever cold boiled ones are left from dinner for the poor potatoless man to take away with him.

[*Happy Thought*.—Good title for a country story—*The Potatoless Man: a Tale of Hard Times*!]

Josslyn Dyke now joins in.

"You'll never get any potatoes on your land," he says, with an air of authority, "until you use Dumpton's Dressing."

Sandilands doesn't believe in Dumpton's Dressing. No more does Aysford Synge. The ladies are entirely against Dumpton's Dressing. I should like to cut in with some pleasantry about their being still more against Dumpton's *Un*-Dressing, but I feel that anything of this sort would be out of place among the Old County families.

Pelkin Wadd declares his belief in planting potatoes close together. This sounds sociable, and pleasant for the potatoes. Mrs. Byrne won't hear of it. Her gardener, Dixon (they *all* nod, as much as to imply, oh yes, we know Dixon), never plants closely.

Rendlesham thinks Dixon's right, but *the* secret of planting is to cut the potatoe in half, "that," says Rendlesham triumphantly, "is the only safe way."

Sandilands begs his pardon: *he* has tried it. His advice is, "Cut it into quarters. *Then* you may rely on a crop."

Rendlesham denies this warmly. Sandilands asserts it with equal warmth.

Hoshford thinks that potatoes should be planted whole *and* close together. Mrs. Byrne says *not* whole, *but* close.

Josslyn Dyke insists upon Rendlesham's plan with a modification. "Cut them in half," he says, "but plant at good intervals."

"Deep?" asks Synge.

"Oh, no, not deep!" cries Mrs. Byrne, appealing earnestly to Dyke. "You don't mean deep, do you Mr. Dyke?"

Dyke is sorry to differ from the beautiful widow, but his candid opinion is in favour of depth for the potatoes.

"Never deep, my dear Josslyn," says Sandilands, smiling at such a preposterous idea.

"It surely depends upon the soil," observes old Mrs. Tupton, timidly.

It appears that whether they've planted them deep or shallow, whether they've used Dumpton's Dressing, or planted them widely or closely, the result is the same—they've got, they say, "no potatoes—to speak of." And yet they've been speaking of them for the last half-hour.

Apples and potatoes carry us right through dinner. Unfortunately for me, I cannot recollect any good stories about apples or potatoes; and knowing nothing about them, except as to methods of cooking them, and only one of eating them, I am obliged to listen. Suddenly, as if by the touch of a spring, the conversation changes entirely. Some one has observed that the best potato-ground was by Cotley's Farm; whereupon Rendlesham asks, "Who has got Cotley's now?"

Nobody seems to know. Pelkin Wadd has heard that it was in the market again, and Mrs. Aysford Synge thinks that Mr. Gash of Saltend has bought it; when Dyke turns to Gool, and observes—

"Gool, do you know who's got Cotleys?"

The Phantom Butler replies, solemnly, "No one won't take it now, Sir."

He says nothing more, but it is enough. Apples and potatoes have had their day.

"Ah, of course!" exclaims Sandilands, suddenly, remembering. "It's next to The Grange, and it's getting just as bad, they say."

"Really!" exclaims Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne.

"Yes, Mrs. Byrne," says Miss Synge, in answer to the inquiry, "it's quite true. No one will live in the place."

My opportunity has arrived at last.

"Bad drainage?" I ask.

"Oh, nothing of that sort," returns Mrs. Byrne, again resenting

my interference in what may be considered as Confidential County Matters. "*That* could be cured. But you know when a house once gets the reputation of being haunted, you can't induce people to take it."

"It's more than a reputation," observes Josslyn Dyke, gravely. "It's a fact."

We are all listening, and old Mrs. Tupton gives a perceptible shudder.



CHAPTER VI.

FACT—FICTION—EVIDENCE—DOUBT—ASSERTION—PHANTOM BUTLER—
 —MORE EVIDENCE—JOSSLYN'S NERVOUS AUNT—COMFORT—
 FEAR—MRS. BYRNE CONDESCENDS—THE PALLID WHISTLERITE—
 DARKER—THE SCEPTIC CONVERTED—WINE—FIRST GHOST STORY—
 —UNSATISFACTORY—COLD AIR—DIGESTION—AN AWFUL MOMENT.



“YES,” repeats Josslyn, “that The Grange is haunted, is as certain as that all the family have left the place.”

Poor old Mrs. Tupton begins fanning herself, as if she could keep away Ghosts like flies. Gool startles her by offering her jelly, which, from its quivering, and its peculiarly pale colour, appears to

be as nervous as Mrs. Tupton is herself.

“It may be a fact,” says Pelkin Wadd, ex-Master in Chancery, “but who can vouch for it?”

“Cotley’s people,” answers Dyke, with conviction. “They’ve told me all about it.”

Mrs. Aysford Syngé remarks that for her part she doesn’t believe in Ghosts, but that The Grange has never been inhabited since she was a girl; and, Miss Syngé adds, that *she* never liked the look of the place.

"It's a matter of evidence," observes the ex-Master in Chancery, sententiously.

"Quite," replies Mr. Aysford Synge, J.P. "But Cotley's gardener and his wife came to me, and wanted to depose on oath to what they'd seen and heard at The Grange."

This arrests everybody's attention.

Mrs. Tupton's jelly remains on her plate untouched, still quivering. She informs me, in a frightened whisper, behind her fan, that "if you once get her nephew Josslyn on this topic, he's something dreadful. Why," she adds, with a shiver, "he knows all about the Ghosts all over the country, and likes them. Ugh! If they go on talking like this, I'm sure I shan't get any sleep to-night!"

In the gloom by the side-board I think I can just make out Gool smiling grimly.

"Who lives at The Grange now?" asks Hoshford.

"A policeman and his wife," answers Aysford Synge. "Their married son stays at Cotley's, and keeps up the garden. The family have all left."

"They're rent free, of course," observes the ex-Master in Chancery, with a cynical smile.

Everyone resents this imputation; and Mr. Aysford Synge informs the ex-Master, with some asperity, that *he* knows the policeman, and his wife, and his son—that a more honest set does not exist; and Sandilands corroborates the prevalent notion about The Grange being haunted, by asserting that, for *his* part, he (Sandilands) wouldn't live there for a trifle. He adds, that, of course, *he* doesn't believe in Ghosts, yet he should object to a place with a reputation for being haunted.

Everyone, except our host, chimes in with this sentiment. Everyone, except our host, professes to consider a belief in Ghosts absurd, but, on the other hand, no one would, as a matter of choice, prefer residing in a haunted house.

"Then," says Dyke, quietly, "there's not much chance of letting *this*."

"Why!" exclaims Mrs. Lawleigh Byrue, beginning to draw on her long gloves, "surely The Mote's not haunted!"

"Didn't you know *that*?" returns Josslyn, quite astonished.

"Why, there's hardly a room in this old house without a legend. And," adds Josslyn, with considerable pride, "I think Hoshford and Sandilands will bear me out as to the White Lady of the Mote being as well authenticated a Ghost as any in the county."

Hoshford and Sandilands nod acquiescence in this statement; and Rendlesham of Pikley—the crusty old man—turning to Mrs. Tupton, says,

"You're stopping here, Ma'am, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," replies the poor old Lady, whose false front almost slides off her forehead with nervousness—"yes, I am; but," she goes on piteously, "my nephew never said anything about it before. I've only heard him speak of Ghosts in other houses—not here."

"Oh, *you* won't see it, Aunt," says Dyke, consolingly.

"I don't like to talk about such things," she says, making a move, which the Ladies take as a hint, and we all rise.

"You are staying here, too," says Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne to me. "I know I should be afraid of going about alone in this house. I have heard that the servants never stop here long—but I didn't know the reason. The Synges have an old haunted tower in their grounds. I shall get her to tell me all about it. I love ghost-stories, when there's a good fire and lots of people."

This is the first time since our introduction that the "haughty Beauty" has condescended to treat me on an equality with the County people. The Ghost subject has done it. This is "the touch of nature" I was waiting for; and it has come with the supernatural. In Ghost-land, Old County Families, and No County Families meet on common ground; though the idea is rather churchyardy. However, one's thoughts can't be lively, when such a topic is under discussion.

Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne sweeps out of the room after the elder Ladies, and followed by Miss Syngé, who, as she disappears through the dark oak door, in the old oak panel, with her vapoury dress, long white neck, with a black band round it—reminding me of that awful guillotined woman's story—with her pale face, strange melancholy eyes, and immaterial hair, might easily be mistaken for the White Lady of the Mote, who had

accepted an invitation, just for once and away, and whose hour for professional haunting having struck, was compelled, by her strict sense of duty, to vanish from the festive scene.

The room has grown darker in consequence of some of the candles in the old sconces having burnt down, when they were silently extinguished by Gool, while we were waiting upon the ladies' departure.

The gentlemen shuffle themselves into fresh places, and, at Josslyn's suggestion, we form in front of the fire, each one selecting a safe place for his wine-glass.

"I didn't want to frighten the ladies," says Pelkin Wadd, the ex-Master, who has hitherto posed as the sceptic of the party, "but I know all about The Grange. Cotley's old gardener, who came to us afterwards, had seen the ghost himself."

"Indeed!" I can't help exclaiming, being interested.

"Yes. He's a sensible and sober old fellow is Gadd, and he's told me of his having seen a figure at night digging in the garden. And when he went up to it, it vanished."

This seems to everyone rather a tame conclusion to a ghost story that had promised very well at the beginning. There's a general impression—felt, not expressed—that we're to have something better, from someone, presently.

Hoshford also remembers having talked to the man who used to live at The Grange before the Policeman and his wife went there.

"What did *he* say?" I ask.

"Well, the belief is that Cardinal Pole once lived in The Grange; that he buried a large treasure there, and that it is *his* ghost that haunts the place."

"And this man had seen him?" I inquire.

"Yes. He'd seen something; and *he* said he thought it must be the Cardinal. So I asked him what the ghost was like; and he told me that he was a little old man, with grey stockings, brown knee-breeches, and buckles, a blue tailed coat, brass buttons, and an old-fashioned wig, with a pig-tail. He felt sure it was Cardinal Pole, he said, because of his dress."

We all smile, but have a slight suspicion that Hoshford is turning the subject into ridicule. Josslyn Dyke says so plainly, and

remarks that though Hoshford's informant was of course wrong in attempting to make this particular Ghost fit in with the tradition of the place, yet it does not prove anything against his having seen the ghost of some one, though not of Cardinal Pole. "Besides,"—Dyke puts this as an unanswerable climax,—“the Ghost never *said* he was Cardinal Pole.”

Hoshford hastens to assure us that *he*, personally, believes in Ghosts; that he knows several men who've seen Ghosts; as also, it appears, does every one present.

The general opinion appears to be that, on the whole, it is safer to believe in Ghosts than not. It's more complimentary to the Ghosts, of course, and, I fancy, what we all feel about it is, that we would rather assert our belief in Ghosts openly and boldly, so that should any Ghost be listening, he would hear nothing said that might be an inducement for him to catch any one of us alone, and frighten the individual into fits, in order to prove his existence. Our unexpressed formula about Ghosts seems to be: "We believe in Ghosts, *because* we don't want to see any. If we said, 'We don't believe in Ghosts,' then one of them, lurking about this old house—and The Mote, to speak sportingly, is a most likely find for both Ghosts, *and* rats—might catch us unawares, when the consequences would, probably, be serious."

Josslyn Dyke doesn't like speaking of this subject before the servants. He whispers to us that, after they've served the coffee, and withdrawn—he will, perhaps, tell us what he himself has frequently seen in this very house, which would be quite enough to scare away most men in one night. And here he looks fixedly across the table into the furthest gloomiest recess, as though penetrating the darkness, and requesting one of the resident apparitions to stop there quietly while he is telling the story, and not to come out until his presence is absolutely required for corroboration.

We fill our glasses in turn, silently, as if "charging" to drink a Ghost's health—"A toast to a Ghost; and here's a health to all good Goblins!" Then some look at their watches with a sort of intuitive perception of the near approach of midnight. There is a perceptible air of reassurance on finding that it is barely ten o'clock. Aysford Syngé shivers, as if he felt a draught, and draws

his chair nearer the fire. Hoshford notices this, and observes with, I think, an effort, that "a cold feeling after dinner is good."

"Sign of digestion," says Mr. Sandilands, trying to be cheery.

We laugh in a quivering, uncertain way, and I almost fancy I hear a sort of hollow echo of our laugh behind the heavy tapestried window-curtains, where anyone could hide and play a practical joke. But who would do it? No one, *I hope*.

The door opens slowly. Involuntarily we all turn our heads and eyes, in that direction, like mechanical figures in a waxwork. The door opens, wider, wider, wider, as if pushed from without slowly, and a dark shadow growing and growing from out of the hall, seems to be borne in, silently, on the icy chilling draught.

No one utters a word; and yet we all wonder why some one doesn't say something—no matter what.



CHAPTER VII.

ENTRANCE—GHOST STORIES COMMENCE—UNSATISFACTORY—DEEPENING SHADOWS—MY STORY—HOSHIFORD'S—OTHERS—JOSSLYN—DEPARTURE—REMAINDER—NERVOUS AUNT—RETIRING TO REST.



THE door remains open for a few seconds !! No one appears.

Then servants enter with coffee. We all seem much relieved, having, though no one liked to own it, expected a Ghost, or several Ghosts.

Gool had been keeping the door open with one hand, so as to give free passage to the servants. Gool himself now follows handing the liqueurs.

Happy Thought.—Spirits — no Ghosts.

Conversation languishes during the ceremony of helping ourselves to coffee. Josslyn Dyke motioning us to silence. We are all longing to continue the conversation about Ghosts, specially to hear Josslyn Dyke's own experiences in this very house, the old Mote; but he puts his finger to his lips, as though saying, "Not before the Boy—I mean—Not before the Butler."

Servants must feel rather awkward during the Dead Silence.

Gool doesn't. He seldom speaks unless addressed by someone. In fact, the Phantom Butler himself might be described as a Mute in attendance on a Dead Silence.

Usually, Gool floats or glides out of a room. But now, when we all have our eyes on the door, which is held open for him by a

servant, in return for Gool's previous courtesy, we see the Phantom Butler actually walk out, as solemnly, but as really as *Hamlet's* father's Ghost does on the stage,—that particular Ghost is usually a very heavy and very human person, with a sonorous voice,—and so if Gool came in like a Ghost, at all events, he goes out like a Butler. This sounds like a proverb—"To come in like a Ghost, and go out like a Butler."

The room is gloomy, so many of the candles having guttered down and been extinguished.

In the dark recesses, the shadows are listening,—cold shadows far away from the fire.

In the robes of some of the portraits on the walls suddenly appear grotesque faces, formed by the pleats and the folds. We point these out to one another in an undertone, and everyone says, "Odd!"

Josslyn Dyke alone seems to think nothing odd in his house that is at all goblinous in character. In his opinion, The Mote is the very place for Ghosts and goblins; and he wouldn't keep it a day, at least, so it seems, were he not sure of the place being full of them.

Someone remarks that if there are not Ghosts here, at all events, there are rats in the wainscot.

Josslyn quietly returns, that for his part *he* likes rats in the wainscot. He also likes Ghosts; the Ghost *not* in the wainscot. Both in their proper places.

In a second we are back "to our muttons"—that is, to our Ghosts.

Josslyn wishes to reserve his evidence until the others have given theirs: whereupon Pelkin Wadd, the ex-Master of Chancery, volunteers an account of a friend of his, whose daughter saw an old man, in a fur cloak, sitting on a box in a room at the top of their house. She recognised him as a friend of the family who had gone to New York, or somewhere; at all events he was the last person she would have expected to find sitting in a box-room at the top of the house.

We quite agree that this is extraordinary in itself, as such a proceeding would be absurdly eccentric on the part of any friend of any family.

"What did she do?" I ask.

"She went down-stairs," answered Pelkin Wadd, very slowly,

as though he were on his oath and paying the greatest attention to details, "called her mother, and said, 'Oh, Mamma, I'm so frightened! There's Mr. Waddilove, in a fur cloak, sitting on a trunk in the box-room!'"

We are breathless.

Pelkin Wadd continues, "She said, 'Oh, nonsense! it can't be!' but her daughter insisted on her accompanying her up-stairs. So up they went, opened the door——"

"Yes," we all say—all except Josslyn Dyke—bending forward eagerly.

"And—could see nothing. The Ghost in the fur cloak had vanished."

We are all dissatisfied.

"Might have been a burglar," remarks Sandilands.

No, no, we won't have any such commonplace explanation as that. Besides, do burglars go about in fur cloaks, and sit quietly on boxes?

Sandilands retorts, "Yes; why not, when they've nothing else to do?"

Pelkin Wadd wishes to add the finish to his story.

"A letter came, some time after," he recommences—(Ah! now we're going to have the real point!)"—"from New York, saying, that at such a time and on such a day, Mr. Waddilove died; and, on comparing dates, the moment of his decease exactly corresponded with the time of the apparition. I don't attempt to explain this sort of thing," says Pelkin Wadd, mysteriously; "I only tell you what was told me on really unimpeachable authority."

During the discussion that follows Pelkin Wadd's narrative, I try to think of a ghost-story—a first-rate one—told me by the very man himself, who had seen the Ghost, with the names, dates, places, and everything as clear as daylight; and himself, the narrator, a public character, above fear, and of irreproachable morality. Dear me! What *was* his name? I feel it is no use beginning the story, unless I can give *his* name; and I can't, for the life of me, recall it at this moment. I shall probably remember it to-morrow, when I am miles away from the present party. Still, if I could but remember the story *now*, is it so good,

so convincing, and would be presented on such evidence, that I am sure I should dwell in the grateful remembrance of every one, as *the raconteur* of *the* marvellous story of this evening. And as I am only second-hand with this story, having received it directly from the person to whom it occurred, any one wishing to treat his friends to such a story, would naturally send for *me*. In fact, it is one of those stories, which is a little fortune in itself to diners-out. It is far better than a humorous story, as the interest depends on getting it first-hand, if possible, but if not, at all events second-hand; while a humorous story may be all the better for the little embellishments and additions of various witty *raconteurs*; truth in the latter case, being no object.

I *do* wish I could remember my story.

Hoshford tells us about what he himself saw when he was sleeping in some old manor house.

"I woke up," he declares, "and saw as clearly as I see you"—this he addressed to Pelkin Wadd, who is a very evident object—"a woman in a sort of white dress, and without a head."

This does startle us. Without a head! We all unconsciously move our chairs nearer the fire, and the shadows seem to be creeping slowly up towards us out of the recesses. Looking nervously behind me, it seems that we are at this moment only separated by the dining-table from the shadows.

"But," says Sandilands, "you were dreaming."

We all wish to force Hoshford into allowing that he doesn't know whether he was dreaming or waking. He won't alter a single item of his story. He says in effect you can take it or leave it. There it is, swallow it, or don't swallow it. I should like to suggest the explanation, that it was somebody who had lost her head, and wandered into his room; but I know Jesslyn Dyke would set this down to sneering or trifling, while really it is only due to nervousness.

"I tell you," he affirms with evident conviction, "that I saw a Headless Woman standing at the foot of my bed, as clearly as I see any one in this room."

Josslyn observes calmly. "Certainly. Why not?"

We are all silent. Why shouldn't Hoshford see a Headless Woman? No: no one can state any just cause or impediment.

I am still trying to remember my story. I don't like to say "I've got such a capital ghost-story if I could only recollect it." That's the truth; but I must be silent, as truth is not to be told at all times.

Then Josslyn, being asked to give some account of The Mote, begins by saying, "Well, I'm not fond of talking about it"—this sounds as though he were on intimate terms with the Ghosts, and didn't like to betray their secrets.

"There's not a room in the house," he goes on deliberately, "that isn't haunted. I don't wish," he interrupts himself to say, turning to me; "I don't wish you to repeat this to my Aunt, or she would be frightened into fits, and wouldn't get a wink of sleep all night."

I intimate that on no account would I mention the subject to his Aunt, Mrs. Tupton; and of course I feel bound to accept as a compliment the fact of his confiding the ghost-stories of The Mote to *me*, as much as to imply that *I* am dauntless, and my repose not to be disturbed by a thousand ghosts.

I wish I could recollect my story of my friend who saw a Ghost. I can't even recollect his name; and its credit depends on his personal authority. It's better than anything I have heard yet—except, perhaps, Hoshford's, about the Headless Woman—which was first hand. I remark, however, curiously enough, that the general tendency is to give implicit credit to second-hand stories, but to question the good faith of anyone who relates something marvellous that happened to himself. In fact, on our quitting the room, I overhear Aysford Synge asking Sandilands what the latter had thought of Hoshford's story, and receiving the curt reply that in his (Sandiland's) opinion, Hoshford was screwed and didn't know what he was talking about. How much better Hoshford's story will come out when he himself isn't present. I shall tell it myself, if I can recollect it, and, of course, shall add that the man to whom it happened was as sober as a judge on the bench, and one of the most sensible men I've ever met.

Josslyn Dyke informs us, that "There is one room in the house—he would rather not mention which—where the wicked old lord, the Earl of Depford—was murdered. The assassins, it was supposed, entered either through a panel or from behind the bed; and

after the deed, they managed to conceal the body in a closet, where it was found some months afterwards. The figure of the old Earl is seen, points to the wounds with one hand, and with the other to a dark mark on the wall, where it is supposed he had secreted some important papers. These have never been found."

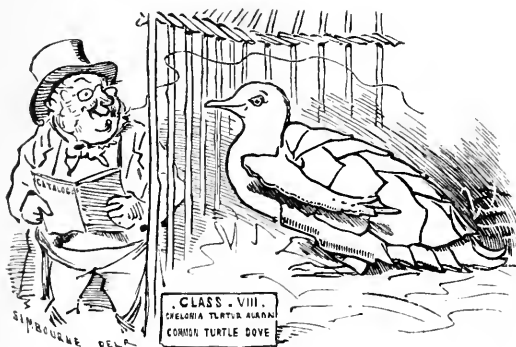
"Have *you* ever seen the Ghost—yourself?" I ask, for I don't like to inquire if I am to sleep in the haunted chamber: and if I can get him to start a good long ghost-story, it will give me time to remember mine. Also I feel that if I can only tell a ghost-story myself, I shall be less nervous.

"Oh dear! yes," replies Josslyn, "often."

Silence. We regard one another. Josslyn is perfectly sober, at all events. On the other hand, he is our host, and no one likes to question or contradict him.

"Isn't there a room here that hasn't been opened for centuries?" asks Pelkin Wadd.

"Yes," replies Josslyn; "but the door is concealed, and we've never been able to discover it. But what I've seen in this very room where we are now sitting," he says, impressively, "would ——" Here he pauses.—So do I!



CHAPTER VIII.

JOSSLYN'S EXPERIENCE — INQUIRY — ANXIETY — DISAPPOINTMENT —
 GHOSTS IN THE DRAWING-ROOM — MRS. TUPTON'S FRIGHT —
 DEPARTURE—MY UNREMEMBERED STORY—TO BED—UP-STAIRS—
 RETRACING—THE CLOCK—THE OLD LEGENDS OF THE HOUSE—
 BUT WHAT NEXT ?



WE ARE listening for what Josslyn is going to tell us about his own experience of Ghosts in this house.

He considers, then continues: "Well, I was sitting here one evening, about five o'clock, in the winter, when from that corner"—pointing to a dark recess between window and door, which we all regard intently, then murmur "Yes," whereupon he resumes in a

measured tone, with his eyes fixed on that spot—"from that corner, there seemed to come an icy cold blast, not blowing strongly, but like a draught through a small ventilator. In fact, I cannot describe to you the strange sensation which seemed to take

possession of me at that moment. I am not at all nervous, and I walked up to the corner in order to examine the place."

It occurs to me how nervous *I* should have been in such a situation. Enough to make one's hair turn white. I do not utter this observation aloud, but only smile approvingly, as though to convey the idea of my perfect approbation of his conduct in such trying circumstances, and wish him to understand that, of course, any one of us here, especially myself, would have behaved in precisely the same courageous manner.

"I tapped the wall," continues Josslyn, "and looked everywhere; there was no crack, no opening; but the strange, chill draught continued; and, as I returned to my chair, I heard a step following me, close at my heels. I turned round. There was nobody!"

We hold our breath, and Josslyn resumes, quietly,

"I sat down, and took up the book I had been reading."

"What was it—I mean what book?" asks Rendlesham of Pikley, the crusty man, thinking that *now* he has got at the cause of the hallucination.

"The book?" returns Josslyn Dyke, carelessly, "Oh, it was by the Cambridge Professor of Political Economy, about the 'Analysis of the Theory of Equitable Insurance considered as a Factor in the Future of the British Empire'—a dry subject that interested me at the time."

Rendlesham of Pikley retires, so to speak, into his shell. The book in question was *not* calculated to inflame the imagination about Ghosts.

"Well, go on!" I say, for I am anxious, very anxious, to know what *is* to be seen in this house where I have to stay all night. *But not to-morrow, if I know it.*

"Well," continues Josslyn, slowly, and looking over his shoulder at the deepening shadows, as though consulting them on the subject, "Well, there suddenly grew out of that corner an enormous ——" Here he breaks off. We are all waiting. Presently he shakes his head, and says, "No—I won't tell you what I saw. It is better not. You would only laugh at me, and think me cracky if I told you."

We all swear we won't laugh and think him cracky. This, however, is to encourage him to go on with his story.

Nothing will induce him to utter another syllable. He rises, regretting, he says, that he should have said even as much as he has. We look at one another. There is some hesitation about leaving the room. This would be the opportunity for *my* story, if I could only call to mind the man's name, and where he was when it happened, and what it was that did happen. I have a faint glimmering of my story. Just so much as to enable me to say to myself, "His name was something like Hoskins," when we have to join the Ladies in the drawing-room. We don't saunter out, we crowd out, as if for warmth.

In the drawing-room they also have got on to ghost subjects. It is impossible to help it, in this house. Poor Mrs. Tupton is trembling. Miss Aysford Synge has been telling such dreadful stories, "All about *this* place, too!" she exclaims.

Mrs. Synge has also been narrating a story about some house in this county, where a coach-and-six always drive up to the front door whenever one of the family is going to die. Mrs. Tupton begs them "not to go on in this manner," and the words are scarcely uttered when we all hear the sound of a carriage and horses coming up to the front door. Mrs. Tupton starts hysterically, and is only prevented from going off altogether by the entrance of a footman to announce "Mrs. Lawleigh Bryne's Carriage!"

Mrs. Lawleigh Byrne declares she is really too awfully nervous, and daren't go out into the hall alone for the world. Josslyn accompanies her, to assist her with her mantle.

The carriages are announced. At this moment the name of the hero of the ghost-story I have been trying to remember the whole evening, suddenly occurs to me. I can't ask Josslyn to recall the company to listen to my story, and, indeed, now I've got his name, I am not quite sure of the details. While I am putting these together, the guests have all left; and Josslyn, his Aunt, and myself are alone at The Mote. Mrs. Tupton sends for her maid to sleep in her bed-room, as she is so dreadfully nervous, and Josslyn takes up his candle.

Josslyn asks me if I think I can find my way to my room. At first I say, "Yes, I think so," and add, with an air of gaiety, "Good night, Josslyn. Hope I shan't see any ghosts." But, on

reconsideration, I ask him to show me to my room, as I am not quite sure of its whereabouts.

"Yes, with pleasure."

I say to him, "I should like to have a good chat together over old times, and we can smoke a cigar before the fire."

He makes no reply to this suggestion.

My artful idea is to get him to talk and smoke before a good fire in my room, while I gradually, but surely, undress and get into bed. Then Josslyn can put out the light and leave me ; for, once comfortably in bed, with a nice, ruddy, cosy fire smiling at me, like a cheery companion, I defy ghosts—specially with my eyes shut.

If Josslyn Dyke will only fall, so to speak, into my sociable trap, then I don't care whether mine is the haunted room *par excellence*—they're *all* haunted more or less—or not.

"Come !" says Josslyn, as solemnly as though he were leading me to the condemned cell. All the lights are out, except the candle he is carrying. Suddenly I start back. "What on earth ——?" A few inches above the floor are two goggle eyes glowering at me. Recovering myself, I ascertain that these eyes belong to one of the weird animals, the one that is something between a bull-dog and a grotesque Chinese ornament, which I had seen on my arrival. The other dog, the thin white one, pointed at both ends, is just behind him.

"Are the dogs coming up-stairs ?" I inquire.

"Yes," answers Josslyn. "*Snap* and *Fiend* sleep in my room. So does *Griff*, the black cat. You can have one of them with you, if you like."

Offer declined with thanks. Hate making a menagerie of a bedroom. Besides, I have always understood animals see ghosts quicker than men do (isn't this idea embodied in a proverb about "Pigs seeing the wind ?") and behave in a manner that would drive me to the verge of insanity. No ; let them all come with Josslyn to my room ; but let the whole party quit the apartment together. We ascend the stairs.

Past the dark corners again—darker than before ; along the narrow slip of old carpet, which seems to have been laid down to accommodate a line of acrobats, past the military ghost clock,

which keeps time, as a secret, locked up in its own case, in front of which Josslyn stops, as do also the animals, his three familiars, *Fiend*, *Snap*, and the black cat *Griff*, who, having trotted on in front with his tail erect, as though he were saying, "*Suivez moi !*" now turns, and sidles up against the wainscote, making his tail describe all sorts of curious curves, and then performing the figure "8" in and out between Josslyn's legs, occasionally rearing himself up on his hind legs while opening a very red mouth to utter a complaining sort of whine, intimating his impatience at our unnecessary loitering.

"That clock," Josslyn informs me, in a subdued voice, as if afraid of being overheard, and perhaps contradicted, by some members of the Phantom Horner family, perpetually in the corners, "that clock is nearly two hundred years old. It is said to have stopped at the very hour, on the evening of the murder, when the wicked old Earl went to his room for the last time. No one has ever dared to move it; and all attempts at winding it up have been utterly useless."

"The hands have been moved, I suppose?" I observe, as carelessly as I can, though with that ghostly faded old clock-face staring into mine, I am somehow conscious of my remark probably being considered as an impertinence. Not by Josslyn—oh dear, no! not at all by Josslyn! I don't take him into consideration in the presence of the Clock.

"The hands," my host answers, "have never been altered. One of the family, a reckless, hard-drinking, hard-riding Squire, who inhabited The Mote about fifty years ago, made a bet that he *would* move the hands."

"Well?"

"Well—when his companions, whom he had left at table, came to look for him, they found him sitting where we now stand, a gibbering idiot, the glass of the clock-face open, and the hands pointing where they had always pointed, and where they have pointed ever since."

The clock hands, I notice, point to twenty-five minutes past eight.

"The wicked old Earl," I observe, "used to retire early."

Josslyn regards me regretfully. I beg his pardon. I really did not intend a pun. No, I explain, I simply meant that the wicked

old Earl did not on that particular night go to bed late. On my word, there seems to be a punning fiend at my elbow, suggesting, "Now for another! Say that, though deceased, he couldn't be spoken of as the *late* Earl." But I won't yield to the temptation, which is simply a matter of nerves, as is a joke with the Dentist who in another second will be holding your jaw for you and pulling up an ancient tooth by its roots. I beg Josslyn to believe me when I say that I really did *not* mean to pun, but am perfectly serious.

Apparently satisfied with my apology, which he seems to accept on behalf of the clock, Josslyn answers,

"Yes, twenty-five minutes past eight was his time for retiring. And that hour has been ever since invariably associated with some calamity in the family history."

"Really?"

The dogs both settle themselves down with their forepaws out before them, like two young Sphinxes, as though expecting a story. The black cat, whose patience has been long ago exhausted, has, with less politeness, disappeared.

"At twenty-five minutes past eight," Josslyn commences in a mysteriously confidential tone, "the second Earl of Depford was born. He ruined the property; and one morning he was found hanging on an elm-tree. They cut him down, but he was dead. His watch had stopped at twenty-five minutes past eight."

"How strange!" I murmur; and my voice seems somehow or another to belong to some one behind me, so that I am strongly inclined to turn round and see who it is. The words, "How strange!" seem to have come *to* me from outside; to have pervaded me, to have so got into my head, that I feel as though there were some mechanism fitted up inside it, arranged to produce only the two articulate words in a dull, muffled tone, "How strange!"

"The third Earl," continues Josslyn, eyeing the imperturbable clock-face with respectful sadness, "ran away with an heiress, and they were privately married in this house, one Christmas eve, at twenty-five minutes past eight. He wouldn't wait till the half-hour, as the guardians of the young Lady were actually hammering at the door. The marriage was an unhappy one. That day year he returned home suddenly to find his young wife unfaithful. The

dinner, which should have been only laid for one, was set out for two: the Earl rushed from the room, met Captain Gerard Cleveland on these very stairs, and stabbed him to the heart. On returning to the dining-room, he found the young Countess sitting before the fire. Thinking it was the Captain, she said, ‘Gerard, you *are* too soon; we do not dine till eight-thirty.’ ‘And it is now eight twenty-five!’ thundered the husband. What became of them no one knows.”

“Were they never seen again?” I inquire, for the story seems to finish rather abruptly, and then, to clear my throat—for my voice sounds husky, I cough gently, very gently—stifling the sound, as though I were in the sick-room of an invalid, whose life depended on his not being disturbed by the slightest sound, and at the same time casting a side-glance at the historical staircase.

Josslyn answers slowly,—

“They were never seen again . . . *alive*. But——”

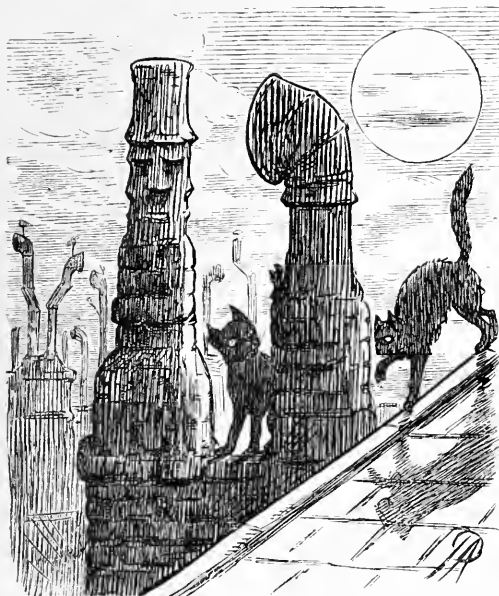
He pauses, regarding me inquiringly, as if debating with himself whether my initiation is sufficiently advanced to permit of my being admitted to the real secrets. He decides in my favour, and resumes—

“*But*”——



CHAPTER IX.

CONTINUATION OF LEGEND—TO OUR ROOMS—HAUNTED CHAMBER—
THE FIRST SURPRISE—A DIFFICULTY.



“**B**UT,” says Josslyn Dyke, continuing the story of the Earl, the Countess, and the Lover, as we stand before the weird old clock on the landing, “but they are often seen in the house, on the stairs, in the rooms, in the passages, the three Earls, the Countess and her Lover, and that’s my difficulty in getting any ser-

vants to stop. They say they *won’t* stay in the same house with Ghosts.”

I pretend to smile at this unwillingness on their part, as a vulgar prejudice arising from want of education. Still *is* a dilemma for a master, when his servants come to him and say, “Well, Sir, either the Ghosts or ourselves must go. Which is it to be? If the Ghosts stay, *we* give notice.” It *is* a difficulty.

Josslyn shakes his head and simply quotes, “‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,’ I am Horatio in this instance, ‘than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’” I admit the probability implied in this sentiment, and he continues,

"How can you explain the stoppage of this clock at this particular hour? the impossibility of altering it? the connection of this time with the dreadful events I've just told you? And, mind, these apparitions are only seen at intervals of eight days, and then invariably at three separate times, eight hours apart, within the twenty-four hours, commencing at 8.25 in the morning, then at 4.25 in the afternoon, then at 12.25 at midnight, and lastly at 8.25 A.M., when their visits cease for another eight days."

I am just about to ask, "Have you seen them lately?" when it occurs to me that this is the title of some music-hall comic song, most inappropriate to the occasion, and quite opposed to my present state of mind, which is, to say the least of it, reverentially respectful towards all Ghosts in general, and the Ghosts at The Mote, Moss End, in particular.

"I don't talk about these things to everybody," observes Josslyn, making a move, whereat his familiars look curiously at him, with their head on one side, as much as to say, "Well, what are you going to do *now*!"

"No, it wouldn't do to tell everybody," I return, taking his remark as highly flattering to myself.

"But," he says, pausing, after taking half a dozen steps down the passage. "But, it *is* curious that this should be the eighth of the month, and," he adds, taking out his watch, "I very rarely sit up as late as this talking, least of all on such a subject."

"Late!" I exclaim, "surely it's not past twelve." "The time by me," he replies most impressively, "is exactly *twenty-five minutes past twelve*."

I refer to my own watch. Yes, that *is* the time. At least, by me, it is exactly thirty-five minutes past, but then I always keep my watch ten minutes fast.

I am staggered. I find myself murmuring, "So it is," and I am conscious of the mechanism at work again in my head on the two muffled words, "Very strange—Very strange—Very strange!"

Josslyn is waiting for me at the end of the passage. Until I, as it were, woke up and saw him I was unconscious of standing still. To say "Go on! I follow," occurs to me; but, like

Macbeth's answer, it sticks in my throat, for I remember they are *Hamlet's* request to the *Ghost*. Very strange—Very strange—Very strange !

“Here's your room,” says Josslyn, throwing open the door.

I had hoped he was coming in to keep me company. No ; he only nods at me, and says “Good night.” I can't exercise hospitality to my own host, and invite him to “step in and sit down.”

I watch his retreating figure, accompanied by his familiars. *Snap* slouching along as if he'd met a *Ghost* who had kicked him severely, and *Fieul* with pointed head turning this way and that, and pointed ears pricked up in a nervous state, as if ready to jump out of the *Ghost's* way at the slightest and shortest notice.

Josslyn stops to look round, and say in a low whisper, “Gool will call you in plenty of time. We breakfast at eight twenty-five punctually. Good night.”

Then he once more turns on his heel, and presently disappears round a corner, then the light gradually dies away. The passage is in darkness. I shut the door of my room, and—I haven't done such a thing for years—examine the lock.

Then I say to myself, “Pooh ! what nonsense !”

Thank goodness, a cheerful fire.

I deposit my candle on the dressing-table. I light the other two. I should like to light fifty, and have them all about the room, which, on the other side, away from the light of fire and candles, is in deepest shadow, though not in utter darkness.

I won't stop to think.

I don't like to brush my hair before the glass, lest I should see a face peering over my shoulder. Nerves.

I'll get into bed rapidly ; and I won't look at the grim old picture, three-quarter length, which may be that of the wicked Earl of two hundred years ago. I come to the conclusion that I won't cross the room to put my boots outside. No ; Gool will take them in the morning. I wonder if the wicked Earl put *his* boots outside, on the night when—hang the wicked Earl !

Now for the candles—stay—is the fire blazing—yes—plenty of cheery firelight—so one, two, three ! out go the candles ! And now, with one jump—

No—something moving between my legs and the bed-post—between me and the post—

Something which leaps on to the bed before I can get there.

I start back, and very nearly fall backwards into the fire-place.

What the . . . ?

The Black Cat, on my bed, walking up and down like a perturbed spirit on the counterpane, rubbing itself against the post, then taking another turn, then looking at me . . . and I at her. A pleasant beginning of the night's rest. Myself and Black *vis à vis*, the cat having far and away the best of it, having its warm fur coat on, and being on my bed, while I have anything but a warm fur coat on, and not even my slippers, and I'm out of bed.

I don't like a strange cat in my room ; I don't like any animals in my room ; but specially a strange cat, when I'm—when I'm—well, in fact, when I'm going to bed.

I should be afraid of falling asleep while a strange cat was there ; though there's not much chance of that, as I have heard well-authenticated stories of a partiality, peculiar to cats, for sucking up the breath of sleeping infants, and so killing them.

I am not an infant, it is true, but this is a cat, and when I'm asleep, and only my head visible on the pillow, *would a cat know whether I was an infant or not !*

If the whole story isn't true, then all I can say now feelingly is, that it's the sort of thing nurses tell children, who never forget it. I haven't forgotten it. It's a very big cat, what they call a fine cat, and it plucks, impatiently, with its fore claws spread out, at the counterpane, in a tigerish way. Then it describes a sort of arch with its back, and erects its tail rigidly, as if some wild idea had entered its cat's head of representing itself, bodily, as a model for a Norman gateway, with a perpendicular tower at the side. No one ever yet heard of a cat having gone mad on the subject of architecture, yet this looks like it. It has a wild look about its eyes too. The longer I regard the creature, the wilder it seems to become, and the more energetically does it claw the counter-

pane, as though it were something alive that it felt a cruel delight in tearing to pieces. Then it opens its red mouth and "wows,"—savagely, I think.

Years ago I remember being in a kitchen when a cat had fits. It flew madly round the place, smashing plates and soup-tureens (it got its head into one—but backed out of it again furiously), biting and scratching, and was finally knocked on the head by a bell-hanger with a hammer. The awful thing about that mad cat was that, during the entire paroxysm, it never uttered a sound.

If this cat has fits, there is no hammer, and what is worse, no bell-hanger to use it !



CHAPTER X.

CAT ON COUNTERPANE—INDUCEMENTS—CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT CATS
—WITCHES—FAMILIARS—MANŒUVRES—DECISION—AWAY—DIS-
APPEARANCE—RETIREMENT—THOUGHTS ON SMILES—IN BED—
PRACTICALITY—ATTEMPTS—MY DREAM—AN AWAKENER—INEX-
PLICABLE—MORNING—MYSTERY—QUESTION—ANSWER—RETURN
—APPOINTMENT—NARRATION—RUDE INCREDULITY—MEM.



THE Black Cat—*Griff* is its name—still on the bed. It won't come off. There is nothing for it but coaxing. A dog being of a more credulous nature, can be induced to run out of a room on receiving an intimation (false of course) as to the existence of rats, or cats, outside. But a cat is not to be taken in, or rather is not to be put out, by such simple devices. Were I to open the door, and say, "Mouse! mouse! Hi! In there, good cat!" he wouldn't stir. The mention of a rat would present no attraction; and though a dog would dash off any-

where in expectation of finding a cat, yet the reverse of this is the case with the latter animal.

The part of the room where the door is, becomes darker and darker, as the fire only throws a warm glow on its own little social circle of fender, fire-irons and hearth-rug. Occasionally, a gleam, shooting up like a signal to the spirits, illumines, for a second, the

face of the old Cavalier in the picture. In that brief space, as I, in my bewilderment, am looking up from the cat to the wall, utterly forgetful of the picture, he seems to appear before me like the apparition of the *Flying Dutchman* did to *Senta*; and, by the light of that fitful flame, his eyes open and close upon me, as though he (whoever he is) were astonished at my hesitation in dealing with a mere cat.

But it isn't a mere cat; it's a Tom Cat, a big Tom Cat, and a Tom is much fiercer than a Tabby. At least, so I have always understood.

I feel I must be asleep before the fire goes out.

I cross into the shadow, and open the door. Silence and gloom in the passage, anything but enticing to most animals, though I fancy cats rather prefer darkness; and to a London cat, a coal-hole offers unusual advantages for rest and meditation, with occasional diversion,—occasioned, I should imagine, by beetles and mice. But a cockney cat, or Whittingtonian kitchen cat, is quite another being from the sleek drawing-room bred, dining-room fed, black cat, in a country house, which probably disdains the common domestic mouse,—a term that sounds better than the “house-mouse,”—and indulges only in field sports, and the excitement of poaching on various preserves.

I hold the door open. I could not be more polite were I ushering a Duchess into a drawing-room.

“Puss! Puss! Puss! Come Pussy!”

“Mow!” replies *Griff*, still pacing up and down, and lifting up his feet as though the counterpane were a patchwork of hot plates.

It flashes across me how so many fairy stories are associated with cats, and not one with a dog. At least, I do not remember any dog figuring as a hero. The witch's familiar is invariably a black cat. Cats are always associated with something grotesque, weird, or diabolical. I don't so much mind a feminine cat, like, for example, the White Cat; but a black Tom Cat, a monster with glaring eyes, and claws that you can hear as they pluck at the quilt—no!—out he must go. I can't stand shivering at the door any longer. The fire-shovel and poker must be introduced into the scene, when it will become uncommonly like a haunted bed-room in the good old

Pantomime times,—only without the music,—and I must take my chance of waking people with the noise.

I steal round to the fire, giving, by my manners, no hint to the cat of the contemplated manoeuvre. Now then! Whoosh! Whirr! Clang! I am executing a sort of white-robed classic Indian war-dance on the hearth-rug.

The cat has vanished. Into the darkness. Gone. I assure myself of the fact, very carefully, and cautiously. Now, as *Lady Macbeth* says, (why that horrid scene conjured up *now*?) “To bed! To bed! To bed!!”

I expect to see a ghost. Were a ghost to appear now, as I snuggle into the pillow, and insist on tucking me up for the night, it would be nothing more than I had expected. I expect the door to open slowly (in spite of its being locked). I hear the crackling of the last log on the fire. I hear the furniture, and the wood-work, snapping, like overstrained fiddle-strings. But it is warm and comfortable in bed, and if a ghost came now, I feel I should have the best of it. In seeing a ghost, I fancy being in bed, or out of bed, must make *all* the difference. So it seems to me,—at present. In fact, I begin to wonder about the wicked old Earl, and the picture, and the clock, and then I remember somebody’s after-dinner story about the ghost of Cardinal Wolsey in blue coat and brass buttons, and I actually smile.

I like smiling in bed; it is so cosy. I am convinced that at no time of one’s life can one’s smile appear so perfectly happy, or be so indicative of a contented mind, at peace with all the world, as a smile in bed.

It is a pretty subject, too, for a picture, “The Smiler in Bed,” no matter who the smiler may be. It may be true, and is true to a certain extent, to say “There is no place like Home;” but give me the very kernel of that sentiment, and let me exclaim with enthusiasm, “There is no place like bed!”

With the glass at several degrees below freezing point, with expenses within and expenses without, there *is* no place like bed. Bed! bed! soft, warm bed! wherever I wander there’s no place like bed. And as to ghosts—the bed-posts mark, as it were, the boundaries of the charmed circle, within which no ghosts can

penetrate to hurt me. No, here I can think, and blink, and smile at the fire, and be happy.

Then, I argue, that if there are ghosts they won't hurt *me* ; and I have half a mind to utter this sentiment aloud, so that, should there be any ghosts ready to appear, they may be anxious not to lose my good opinion.

My clothes, hanging helplessly over the chair-back, assume a fantastic shape, and I can't help thinking how really fearful it would be, were the double of one's own face gradually to appear out of the looking-glass. I direct my attention with a sort of deferential defiance towards the portrait, half daring it to come out of its frame, and half imploring it *not* to do anything of the sort.

Then I close my eyes, and try to sleep. Failure.

It occurs to me how foolish it is to indulge in any conversation late at night calculated to excite the imagination. As a remedy, I will close my eyes once more, and be practical. I will arrange what I am going to do to-morrow. Everything in order, beginning with the first thing in the morning—breakfast. I don't intend staying here another day, as Josslyn Dyke and his nervous aunt, Mrs. Tupton, will not be lively company.

This practicality leads to sleep. I do sleep, but I dream an uninteresting stupid dream.

Somehow I am dressed in a Cambridge B.A. gown and hood, which is not exactly a B.A. gown and hood, but only something of the sort ; and I am dining with a Lady, who it is I haven't the slightest idea, as I am ignorant of her name, and have never seen her face before, though she is, somehow, a very old friend of mine, and I am, apparently, on the most intimate terms with her ; and there is a thin person at table, who seems to be all shirt-front, and no features. Suddenly there appears before the Lady a dish for her to carve. She and the featureless guest both laugh, and I declare that I cannot eat rat with white sauce. I argue the point with somebody. It is a strange dish ; it has a body like a chicken, but smothered in white sauce, with the head and tail of a rat. I am aware (how I don't know) that there is nothing else coming, and immediately afterwards, without, however, ever losing sight of the Lady, or the dish, or the featureless guest with the shirt-front, I go up the steps of a Church, and find myself on a platform, where

I pass several eventful years of my life as a soldier, and, for having done something which affects me to tears, I am tried by a court martial in India, and condemned to be shot. I say farewell to a number of people in bright blue coats, and the word is given for the guns to fire. They fire ; and I am awoke by the most tremendous thud on the floor. I start up. It is perfectly dark. I can see nothing. I will swear to the thud on the floor, with the force of a sledge-hammer.

I wait anxiously for a repetition of the sound. No ; a distant clock—I have not previously noticed the sound of a clock—strikes four. I wish it had been five, or six. The fire is out. I do not know where to find the matches. But the thud ? Could it have been the cat ? Impossible, or I should hear it scrambling about. A bird down the chimney ? No, or it would be fluttering in the room. And to have made such a noise the bird would have had to have been as big as an ostrich and as hard and heavy as a piece of granite. Somebody in a room above, or below ? No. Not a sound in the room. Sleep is out of the question. I know what it will be, I shall remain feverishly awake till daylight, then drop off into a sound slumber when I ought to be getting up. No further noise. Clock strikes five.

Before six I am once more asleep, undisturbed by dreams, and am only aroused by a knock at my door, and somebody vainly turning the handle. It is Gool with the hot water. He reminds me that breakfast is at twenty-five minutes past eight.

When up, I examine the room. Not a sign of anything having fallen. The noise is inexplicable.

I don't mention it to Josslyn at breakfast. In fact I do not intend to tell him at all. I think I detect a certain disappointment in his manner, but that may be my fancy. As Mrs. Tupton does not come down, we are alone. Josslyn hopes I slept comfortably. Oh ! most comfortably. Did I see any ghosts ? "Ghosts ! Oh dear no," I reply cheerfully, "ghosts don't bother *me*." I am sure he is disappointed.

I consult the train-book, and suddenly become impressed with the absolute necessity of my returning to town immediately to keep an appointment, which requires my personal presence, as no substitute will do as well, nor can the matter be arranged by

telegraph, or put off, without loss to one of the parties. (An interview with my hairdresser constitutes in reality the appointment in question—he expects me always on a certain day, and at a certain time ; and as over his door he writes himself “ Hair-dresser by appointment,” I always make the appointment, and he keeps it. But I don’t let Josslyn Dyke into the secret.) And, so, with thanks on my part, for a very pleasant evening and with hopes, on *his* part, that I will come down whenever I feel inclined, to which I respond heartily, “ I will, certainly,” I get into the fly, with my wonderful bag, and leave behind me the Phantom Butler, *Fiend*, *Snap*, *Griff*, and their gloomy master, Josslyn Dyke, of the Old Mote House, Moss End.

Happening to meet my old friend Milburd, I recount to him my extraordinary experience in the haunted room at the Mote. Milburd is utterly wanting in reverence. I tell him that I distinctly heard a bang.

“ Yes,” retorts Milburd, rudely ; “ so do I now : and *you* tell it ! ” Then he goes off in a roar of laughter, shakes me violently by the elbow, hits me in the ribs, and says, “ That won’t do here, my boy. It’s not the first bang you’ve heard in your life which you couldn’t account for, eh ? And not the first you’ve told, either, eh ? Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

Then away he goes in a perfect whirlwind of laughter, taking with him two men, who had been inclined to listen gravely to my story, and to treat me with respect and consideration, but who now have a broad grin on their faces, and who henceforth, when they meet me, will only treat me as a *farceur*, and refer to this story of mine,—this absolutely true narrative of my own experience,—with a wink and a laugh, as a jocose attempt on my part to impose on their credulity with what Milburd has politely called “ a bang.”

Mem.—Never tell Milburd anything serious again.

Happy Thought.—Go and stay with another “ Friend at a Distance ” on the first opportunity.

CHAPTER XI.

INVITATION — SURPRISE — CAPTAIN — REGIMENTALS — HAT — SWORD —
 PICTURE — PROBABILITIES — PETER DERMOD — EXPLANATION —
 AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER — THE HUTCH — ALTERATIONS — SPIRAL
 STAIRCASE — CHILLINESS — PREPARATION.



AN invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Felix Pilton to visit them at their country house, the Hutch, Halfshire. I had accepted Pilton's invitation in Town some time ago.

Two things come upon me as a surprise in connection with Felix Pilton. The first is that he is only "Mister." I always thought, till now, that he was a "Captain." At the Club the hall porter

and the waiters have always spoken of him as "Captain" Pilton; and every one I know has called him Captain. I had not looked in the list to see if that was his title, and it never occurred to me that, for years, people could go on calling a man "Captain" unless he *were* a Captain. Had I been asked by a stranger, who might have seen me walking with Pilton, "Who's your military-looking friend?" I should, with some pride, have answered, "That is Captain Pilton!" Had the inquiry been pressed further, and had I been called upon to mention the Captain's regiment, I should—in the absence of any definite information on the subject—have resented the

question, as implying a doubt of my friend's character. When you tell any one that a friend of yours is "Captain So-and-So," you naturally expect to be believed implicitly. To be asked, immediately afterwards, "Captain! what in?" sounds like a sneer, not only at your friend, but at yourself. It's as much as to say, "What! *you* know a Captain! A pretty sort of Captain *he* must be! Get out! *he's* no more a Captain than *you* are!"—at least, that is the impression that such a question leaves on my mind. Still, I admit that I've never been able to answer it. I have replied in an offhand manner, "Oh—Pilton?—he's Captain in some Hussar regiment"—as, when in doubt, I always choose "some Hussar regiment" for any friend of mine, as it sounds dashing, and is the sort of regiment I should have joined, had I felt, in earlier days, any inclination in that direction.

My notions about regiments, and, about the Army generally, I admit (I admit to *myself*, not publicly) are more than a trifle vague. My idea of a Hussar uniform for example, is founded upon a full-length picture I saw, years ago, when I was a boy. Where I saw it, I don't know, as I might have confused it with some brilliant sign-board—but I don't think so. It represented a Royal Personage in Hessian boots, with very tight-fitting, cherry-coloured pants, gold spurs, maroon jacket covered with gold embroidery, which, by the way, was spangled about in very conspicuous and unnecessary places, suggesting the idea of the tailor having a job lot of gold braid on hand, and sticking it about wherever there was an opening, in sheer despair of ever getting rid of it,—and a sort of flower-pot hat, with something like a smuggler's red night-cap hanging out of the crown (convenient for bivouacking), some gold cords, resembling cut bell-ropes, fastened to it, and a feather stuck into the front, like a small drawing-room hand dusting-brush, perhaps intended to divert the enemy's aim—and this hat he carried jauntily under his arm, as being a better place for it than on his head, while over his left shoulder hung a jacket, the counterpart of the one he was wearing, which might be of use to him in cold weather, as I fancy it was trimmed with fur, or which he might lend to a friend for a fancy ball,—and then, of course, he had a magnificent sword—more like a Turkish scimitar than an ordinary sword—and his right hand was resting on the holster

of a fiery and richly-caparisoned steed, while a half-drawn curtain in the background discovered a fearful scene of carnage going on in the far distance, indicated by flames, and smoke, and a *mêlée* of little figures careering about in a great state of excitement.

Whether the Eminent Person was aware of what was going on when his back was turned, or whether this apparent indifference was intended to impress the spectators with some idea of the Eminent Person's coolness in battle—for to be standing quietly with your horse, in an attitude, having your portrait painted behind a curtain, while one of the fifteen decisive battles of the world is raging outside, within a few yards of you, does certainly denote a vast amount of coolness both on the part of the model, and the artist,—or whether the whole thing was ideal, and the Eminent Person was not a General at all, any more than my friend Pilton is a real Captain, is only known, I suppose, to the painter. But however this may be, my notions of a Hussar have always been regulated by this picture; and when I am asked, "What Pilton"—or any friend of mine, who calls himself Captain, "is a Captain *in*?" I invariably reply, with a touch of profound astonishment at the ignorance of my questioner, "In the Hussars!"

I say to other friends, "I always thought Pilton was a Captain." They return that they had always thought so too. No one had ever taken the trouble to inquire. We had always preferred to think of him as a Captain, and it is a surprise to everyone, when I inform them that he is *not* a Captain. Another surprise—for *me*, at least—comes out on the occasion of this invitation—and that is that Pilton is a married man.

"Oh yes," says Peter Dermot, who knows everything about everybody, without anybody knowing anything at all about *him*, "Pilton's been married for eighteen years, or more. Why, his eldest daughter is quite seventeen."

We ask Peter Dermot, "What's Pilton a Captain in?"

"Some Yeomanry regiment," replies Peter, readily. "I think it's Lord Melidew's Royal Duffs. There are about sixty of 'em: Gentlemen farmers, and landowners. They go out about twice a year, and have a dinner, and an annual ball. It's more to encourage the breed of horses in the county than for anything else. But it's a handsome uniform."

We are satisfied. Pilton is a Captain, when he's at home. And he is a Captain in order to encourage the breed of horses.

Peter Dermod is going down to spend a few days with Pilton. We are to meet there. He wishes he could go for longer than a few days, but he has so much on hand just now. "I can't," he says, with an air of mysterious importance—"I can't spare the time, my boy, just now."

Peter Dermod is a good man to know. You never hear him spoken of as Dermod without the Peter, and should somebody who had only met him casually, ask any friend of his "if he knew Dermod," he would be immediately met with the rejoinder—"Dermod? You mean Peter Dermod," and the casual acquaintance will perceive at once that not to know Peter, or to speak of him as Dermod, argues himself unknown.

Peter is supposed to be an Irishman. On occasion he affects a strong brogue, but no one can fix his county, if Irish, nor can anyone be positive as to his nationality. He is consulted on everything by everybody as an authority, and is presumed to have access to authoritative sources of information on most subjects connected with politics and finance; and as he possesses the art of pretending to conceal his profound knowledge, and at the very crisis of an animated discussion about the Government policy, when appealed to, cajolingly, with, "Come, Peter, *you* can tell us," will shake his head knowingly and walk away as if silently begging you not to press him, Peter is generally credited with being intrusted with such secrets as might determine the fate of empires, and make the fortune of any speculator in foreign stock.

Pilton considers himself fortunate to have secured Peter Dermod, who, I have always heard, is full of anecdote, and the very best of company. Clearly a treat is in store.

I go down to the Hutch, Halfshire, and find a considerable party assembled. Peter is anxiously expected.

The Hutch, Halfshire, is a pretty house, in a charming, well-wooded situation, and, like Rome, was evidently not built in a day—by which I mean that the Hutch has been, probably, put together, at different times, by different people with different opinions. The oldest portion is of the early and very plain English farm-house type, with pointed roof, and plenty of waste

space for box-rooms and lofts. Then came someone who thought it would be cheaper to add than rebuild, and who had a taste for verandahs. This second owner decided that the first was wrong in putting his front door facing north, and so he commenced alterations by turning the hall into the drawing-room, converting the door into a window, and making the entrance on the east side, under a verandah. This gentleman's successor evidently considered both his predecessors utterly mistaken, and at once decided that the drawing-room must be where the kitchen was, that the hall should take the place of the drawing-room, that the front door, with a carriage drive, should be on the West, that the verandahs should remain, and a garden door should occupy the place of the dining-room window.

Then came Pilton, who took The Hutch because, he said, "He saw what could be done with it"—which, apparently, up to the present time, at least, turns out to be very little—except, that as a commencement, he has employed an architect to draw plans, which are to include a turret, and a spiral staircase *somewhere*. His one idea is the absolute necessity in every house of an iron spiral staircase. It is so convenient, and so inexpensive, and so useful in case of fire, and then he adds, as a recommendation, "It looks so light." The advantage of such an appearance apparently being, that, in the event of some dishonest person being struck by the practicability of feloniously abstracting it, like Samson with the gates of Gaza, he would find, to his astonishment, that, though it looked light, it was uncommonly heavy.

Beyond plans, Pilton has done nothing. The last owner had added a wing and a storey, and offices and stable. The wing appears to have been built by someone who had a fancy for variegated tiles, and who thought that the effect of these relieved by Swiss *châlet* woodwork balconies, and narrow casements, would be in admirable contrast to the architectural notions of the previous builder.

"I object," says Pilton, "to regularity and uniformity in a country-house."

Pilton is inclined to burliness and baldness. He likes putting his hands in his pockets and objecting. Not much ever comes of his objecting, and very little from his not objecting. As a rule he

objects, without proposing an amendment. He seldom commits himself to a decided opinion, but usually either represents himself as objecting, or not objecting. Mrs. Pilton is a quiet, thin person, who seems as if she had been shrivelled up by a north-east wind, and was ready for a shiver at any moment.

[*Happy Thought (but not for the person whom it most concerns).*—A constitution knocked all to shivers.]

Mrs. Pilton is always languidly projecting, and Pilton decidedly objecting. The result is, that they stop where they are, at the Hutch.

They don't quarrel. The girls—three of them with ancient Saxon Christian names, indicative of Mrs. Pilton's aristocratic ancestry, for she has rather come down in the family's estimation by marrying Pilton (at least so Peter informs me)—the girls all side with their mother on every question; they all project, and Pilton goes on objecting.

Pilton objected to the family going to London, so Mrs. Pilton projects a party at the Hutch. Pilton objects to too large a party. Mrs. Pilton projects a moderate-sized one. "It's for the girls," says Peter, shrewdly.

I arrive, with Peter, in time for dinner.

Pilton shows me to my room—a bachelor's room—with, so to speak, scratch furniture,—Pilton having objected to unnecessary expense.

"It's not a warm room," says Pilton, standing before the empty grate, with his hands in his pockets; "but I object to a warm room: it's unhealthy."

I say politely that I also object to *too* warm a room; and I glance at the fire-place.

"We tried the fire," says Pilton, "and it smokes horribly; perhaps it's only in this wind, or perhaps the chimney's a bit damp. But I said to my wife that you wouldn't mind, just for once and away, not having a fire."

"Oh, dear no!" I reply, with a serious smile, wishing to goodness he had told me when he invited me that he was going to put me in a small room without a fire, furnished with a small chest of drawers, which has to serve for a toilette-table, and a washing-stand, on which there is no room for a water-bottle or even a bath-sponge

"You'll find the bed all right," he adds : "it's only a small iron chair-bed." I see *that*, and hate it : "but," he goes on, "*I* don't object to a small iron chair-bed myself." No, perhaps not ; but then *he* is not going to sleep on it.

[*Happy Thought*.—I hope when I *do* sleep on it, I shall think better of it.]

Pilton, it appears, doesn't object to a small washing-stand, he doesn't object to the top of the chest of drawers serving for a toilette-table, he doesn't object to no fire in the room, nor to one candle to dress by, nor to only a strip of carpet, nor to the blind only coming half-way down, nor to there being no bell, nor to the draught from door to window, nor to *my* catching cold—in fact, he doesn't appear to object to anything disagreeable that may happen to *Me*. And I suppose he doesn't object to my leaving to-morrow, as I certainly shall, if I'm not more comfortable.



CHAPTER XII.

A JOLLY EVENING AT PILTON'S—THE GLASS—PILTON'S ANTICIPATIONS
—HIS OBJECTIONS—AGREEMENT—ARGUMENTS—FEMALE PILTONS
—DESCRIPTION—LIVELY—PILTON'S IDEAS—PROPOSALS—YOUNG
FISHER—HIS REFUSAL—ANNOYANCE—NO AMUSEMENT—DERMOD'S
ANECDOTES—FISHER'S TUNES—THE GAMES—DESPERATION.



before it, at the imminent risk of dropping the wax on my head, and, probably, getting my parting all wrong. In neither case is the result satisfactory, and the effort of trying to get a view of the top of my head gives me a headache. The difficulty, however, is to induce the glass to remain in any fixed position for more than two seconds. There is a screw loose somewhere at the side, but the only remedy, apparently, is by inserting wedges of paper,

THE looking-glass in my room at The Hutch is unique of its kind,—at least I hope so. It is a very small glass, in a thick, heavy, mahogany-coloured frame, supported by two pillars fancifully shaped like the letter "S," the curve at the base of each pillar being fixed into an imitation mahogany stand. The glass itself is about six inches by eight, and the chest of drawers on which it stands being only about three feet from the ground, I have either to bend over the glass, with a candle in one hand and a hair-brush in the other, or to slope the glass towards me, and kneel down

which process occupies the greater part of my valuable dressing-time. By daylight the glass reproduces my face tinted with a curious sea-green colour, and my hair is reflected as a sort of washed-out whitey brown; the whole picture representing the Portrait of a Gentleman in an advanced stage of biliousness. Pilton says he "doesn't object to this sort of glass;" but then *he* hasn't to use it. *I* have.

"We shall have a jolly evening," says Pilton to me before dinner. "Peter Dermod's capital company. There's Fisher, too—a very amusing fellow—and his sister, one of the best musicians you ever heard."

I am glad of this. According to Pilton's account, the evening promises well.

"I object," says Pilton, in a tone of annoyance, as if I had been contradicting him, or propounding some uncongenial theory, "I object to ordinary people in a house. I object"—he *will* use this formula—"to your namby-pamby Misses, who can only squeak out of tune, and play school exercises on the piano."

I hasten to disabuse him of any idea, which he apparently entertains—for he is talking *at* me as well as *to* me—as to my having a predilection for squeaking girls, and unmusical exercises. In fact nothing bores me so much. He takes no notice of my answer, but continues in the same strain, as though I were entirely opposed to him.

"I object," he says, with increased irritation—he is really making himself angry about nothing—"I object to fellows who can't do anything—who have no conversation, who talk about the weather, and can only come into the drawing-room after dinner, and sit about staring at one another, like stuck pigs."

I warmly protest that no one can object to such proceedings, on anybody's part, whoever they may be, more than I do. The more completely I agree with him, the more emphatic he becomes; so that it really seems as if he wished me to take up the opposite side, for the sake of argument.

"I object to mere tittle-tattle, and gossip," he goes on; "I like some fun after dinner."

I assure him that, I personally, shan't stand in his way, as from

his manner he appears to anticipate my turning out a sort of kill joy.

"I object to doing nothing after dinner," he says, as he leaves the room.

I comfort him with the prospect of our doing something. What does he want us to do? Fireworks? Dance? I suppose I shall find out; but somehow he seems to have aroused within me the very spirit of opposition to amusement to which he "objects" so strongly. If there is one thing I detest above another, it is being forcibly driven into amusing oneself, or other people. If the amusement arises spontaneously, "then," as I say to Pilton at dessert, "it is safe to be a success."

"Oh!" retorts Pilton, "if we're to wait for everyone to amuse themselves by inspiration, we should have to wait a long time. You must have some one to start it."

The female Piltons—Mrs. Pilton and three daughters, who are not so much chips of the old block, as dried-up shavings from the parent maternal stock—are about the very last people to do anything amusing, or to appreciate it when done. They are as stiff, as cold, and as highly polished on the surface as new drawing-room pokers; and the expression on their four countenances, which must be taken by courtesy to represent a smile, is what might be produced on most people's faces by the sudden and unexpected swallowing of bad soda-water. When they *do* laugh, which is quite exceptional, it is as though they were, for the nonce, tolerating something vulgar, in the absence of getting any entertainment of a higher class. They look chilly; and their sentences are frozen up short. They like talking of titled people, and these, I find, are all on Mamma's side, Papa belonging, they in effect intimate, to a lower order of beings.

Pilton, in despite of living in this refrigerating atmosphere, considers himself an essentially jovial fellow. He is always bent on amusement, and must very seldom find his ideas realised. His one great notion of amusement after dinner is "games." He doesn't know any himself, but he expects his guests to have a number of games at their fingers' ends. He can't imagine any greater enjoyment than dressing up and performing a charade.

After dinner he proposes this. It is not jumped at. Peter Dermod, who likes to sit over a cigar, says, "Ah, capital fun," but excuses himself from any physical exertion on the score of gout in his right foot.

Young Fisher, whom I had expected to find—according to Pilton's description of him—"such an amusing fellow," is evidently very nervous, and on being asked by Pilton if he will join in a charade, replies that "he hasn't done such a thing for an age—and that really—he can't act—indeed he can't—at all."

But Pilton remonstrates, "You can dress up."

"Yes," Fisher, with a timid smile, admits. "Yes,—oh yes,—I can dress up—but," he pleads, more nervously and piteously than ever, "I can't do anything when I *am* dressed up."

"Pooh," says Pilton, encouragingly, "we'll all help you."

Poor Fisher looks despairingly round to us, as though to appeal against being sacrificed as a victim to his host's idea of amusement. The others at table—there are several to whom I have not been introduced—hope that Fisher will dress up and amuse the company. We don't care what he dresses up as, if he will only settle it with Pilton, and leave us to enjoy ourselves in peace.

"You can't think," says Pilton, looking round to us, and then nodding his head sideways towards Fisher, as indicating the object of his eulogium, "you can't think what a first-rate actor he is. He's splendid!"

A feeble protest from Fisher, who is heard to murmur to his neighbour that "Pilton is mistaken—that he isn't anything of the sort."

"Oh, you are," Pilton asserts, contradicting him positively. "You *are*, only he's afraid of doing it before you,"—this to me—"and Dermod."

I declare that no one is more easily pleased than myself (if I'm only let alone and not worried and bothered), and Peter Dermod bears witness to himself as being the most uncritical man in existence.

"Yes," says Pilton to us, "you fellows who are always seeing the best acting, can make allowance for an amateur,"—this is pleasant for Fisher, though beyond dressing up, I haven't a notion what he is being called upon to do, or in what his peculiar talent

lies—"and we'll all join. We'll all dress up, and do something. It will amuse the Ladies."

I, for one, venture my opinion that the Ladies—I am thinking chiefly of the Piltons—do not want to be amused in this way.

"It's so meaningless," I protest.

"It's not more meaningless," Pilton retorts, "than sitting there doing nothing."

This argument appears unanswerable, at all events no one likes to contradict our host, and so an awkward silence ensues, which is broken by Peter Dermod observing, in an undertone, to young Fisher, that, "he'd better dress up and have done with it."

Fisher replies also in an undertone that "he doesn't see the fun of it when he *is* dressed up."

"Oh!" exclaims Pilton, evidently disgusted with Fisher's unexpected obstinacy, "of course there's no fun in it, if he *won't* see any in it. He used to be very different."

We see that the fate of the unhappy Fisher is sealed. He won't be asked again to Pilton's, unless, to quote the old song, "he smiles as he was wont to smile."

Pilton is annoyed. He has looked forward to a rollicking evening, and we won't rollick. A gloom seems to have fallen on the company, and Pilton passes the wine sulkily, as if he grudged it to a set of people in whom he has been bitterly disappointed. It occurs to me that, living in such a house with only his female wet-blanket society, he must have looked forward immensely to the chance of an amusing evening among a few fresh faces, and hearing some fresh ideas. In fact we had been asked to cheer him up, to amuse him, in his own way, and we have, with ungrateful unanimity, disappointed him in his object, by expressing a decided preference for amusing ourselves in our own quiet way,—our quiet way being a real relief to us who have come from London.

But Pilton is grievously hurt about his guests,—they won't *do* anything. He had evidently told his neighbours who have come in to dinner, what a jovial evening they were going to have, what capital stories Peter Dermod would tell, what a song I should sing (I'm sure he has told them this), what marvellous imitations of popular actors young Fisher would give, how charmingly Miss

Fisher sings, with various other inducements to "look in during the evening," which had put the neighbours, like John Gilpin's family, "all agog," and on the tip-toe of expectation.

Peter Dermod's stories are all lost, chiefly because the point of most of his anecdotes, as we now find, depends on his audience knowing the people of whom he is talking. I try to assist him, pretending to remember the chief *dramatis personæ* of his anecdotes, but this helps nobody else, and as the others turn away and talk in undertones among themselves on local matters, Peter Dermod has no one to whom he can tell his old stories—and they are old—except myself; and, not wanting to be bored, I stop him at the outset with the information that "I've heard it before,"—whatever it is.



CHAPTER XIII.

A JOLLY EVENING AT PILTON'S (*continued*)—FESTIVITIES IN POSSE—
RISE—FISHER THE TALENTED—REVIVAL—MUSIC—REFUSALS—
THE VICTIM—VICTIM'S VENGEANCE—FINISH—GAMES—BILBY—HIS
GAME—AN AWAKENER—DISAPPOINTMENT—TIME—NO COCKA-
MAROO—AFTER ALL—PROSPECTS.



PILTON still fondly clings to the hope that Fisher will do something to amuse us. Fisher, however, carefully avoids all topics tending in this direction.

The conversation flags. We are becoming meditative, and constantly checking the clock on the mantel-piece by our watches. Then, in answer to Pilton's old-fashioned question, "Shall we join the

Ladies?" we rise, and put down our napkins, as if we'd all just finished being shaved, and were much freshened by the operation.

I wonder if anyone was ever so rude as to reply to the question about "joining the Ladies" in the negative? One solitary person in a very bad temper might do it; and, if so, the obstructionist would be "left sitting"—"bloomingly alone," like the last rose of Summer.

Pilton informs us, confidentially, as we leave the dining-room, that "Fisher possesses real dramatic talent, if he'd only dress

up ; ” but as the talented Amateur persists in his refusal,—subsequently informing me “that he didn’t want to make a fool of himself before a lot of strangers,”—we can only imagine what an intellectual treat we have lost.

We all, more or less morosely, enter the drawing-room. Here most of the party again consult their watches, with reference to the clock in this room, in the hope of finding the time sufficiently advanced to offer a reasonable excuse for getting out of this jovial evening at Pilton’s.

Pilton rouses himself from the depression into which our obstinacy in not amusing one another has thrown him.

He rubs his hands, with as much heartiness as he can assume, and proposes music. He is coming out as a revivalist.

Everybody immediately appears frightened. No one likes to be the first.

Mrs. Pilton appeals to a lank Lady, with a short waist, “Won’t she sing ? ” No, thank you, she would rather not. “Won’t she play something ? ” No, she doesn’t play. She would if she could ; but she has left her music at home, and doesn’t play from memory. “But,” she spitefully retaliates, “surely your daughters will ? ”

Mrs. Pilton’s daughters—looking like three Lot’s Wives, in the process of being frozen into salt-pillars—give three little acid simpers, and protest, one after the other, with three little signals of distress, in the way of coughs, that they really can’t sing, as since the East wind set in, they’ve entirely lost their voices.

[*Happy Thought (by the audience much relieved).* It’s an ill wind that blows no one any good.]

Miss Fisher, on being requested to favour the company with some musical trifle—which expression sounds as if Pilton had asked her to do anything, no matter what, as long as it’s something on the piano just to fill up the time—regrets that she can neither play nor sing, at least not from memory, and she has no music [she’s got it all upstairs in a box, but she won’t fetch it ; I found this out next day], but James, her brother, can—“You know he can, Mr. Pilton ! ” she says, appealing to her host, with a sweet smile, whereupon our distracted host makes a fresh descent on the unhappy young Fisher,—who looks round, imploringly, as though

he were saying to himself, "Why can't they let me alone?"—and reminds him that he can, if he will, "play anything;" that further, "he has a perfectly wonderful touch; and there's not a thing he can't play from memory."

So the miserable young Fisher is lugged out of his corner, and away from a photograph-book, in which he had buried himself, in the vain hope of escaping unobserved from his tormentor, and is compelled, but always under protest, to sit down to the piano.

He hesitates what to begin with. His sister reminds him of something. He objects that his audience "all know that." Whereupon his audience, who do know it by heart (it is something from *Madame Angot*), go to the extent of perjuring themselves for politeness' sake, and declare they've never heard it before, and would so like to hear it now.

So young Fisher, thus adjured, sets to work to play tunes from *Madame Angot*, which he has picked up by ear, and of which he has not, apparently, succeeded in getting a firm grasp, as only the first seven bars or so are right, and then the air suddenly becomes something totally different. It is a sort of nightmare of *Madame Angot*, and very irritating.

Once at the piano, it is very difficult to remove him. Pilton's victim is going to be revenged on Pilton in particular, and on the company generally. He seems to have become, suddenly, part and parcel of the music-stool, and, like the ornaments in a Ritualistic Church, he "can't be removed without a faculty." We employ our faculties in trying not to listen to him; but he goes on playing snatches of airs, asking any one who may happen to be near him, "if they recollect *this*?" or "do they remember *this*?" and as they generally do, and exhibit no desire to hear it again, or don't recollect it, and don't wish to hear it in a mutilated form, young Fisher's tunes gradually become less and less coherent, he plays jerkily at short intervals, like a musical-box out of order, and, failing at last in even amusing himself, he finally subsides into private life, in his old corner, with the photograph book.

We only discover that he has ceased playing by the gradual cessation of the conversation. We sit about helplessly, like Lotos-eaters. Once more we all furtively consult our watches, as though we were playing some game of mental arithmetic against time, or

anxiously expecting an important visitor. No ; time isn't up yet, and we must eke out another half-hour, at least, in some sort of conversation. Pilton, finding his jovial evening becoming intolerably dull, suggests "Games."

"Doesn't anyone know a game?" he asks, in despair.

Once more everyone seems scared. No ; no one knows a game. It flashes across me suddenly, that I once was told of a game—I think it was a game—called "Cockamaroo ;" but whether it was played by counting up numbers, halving them, and adding ten, or whether it wasn't quite a different sort of thing altogether, and played with sticks and a small bell, the flash of memory is too transient to enlighten me. So I keep "Cockamaroo" to myself, and only shake my head.

Pilton turns to Peter Dermod. "Surely *he* knows a game?"

Peter, who has nearly fallen asleep on a chair in a corner, replies that he is acquainted with nothing except leap-frog ; and, having smiled amiably on the company all round, he drops off again into a doze, when, from occasional spasmodic movements, we presume that he is probably playing leap-frog in his sleep.

I reply to Pilton, that I'm afraid I don't know any games ; and, as he suggests the alternative of a song, I declare emphatically that I *never* sing.

People seem to be reassured on hearing this positive asseveration from my own lips ; but we are no nearer a jolly evening than we were a couple of hours ago, when suddenly a very mild young man—somebody's cousin, I fancy,—[capital name for a novel, *Somebody's Cousin*—*N.B.* book it]—but I'd never noticed his presence before—in a remote corner of the room, is suddenly observed whispering to a stont Lady near him, who thereupon exclaims, "Oh !" as if she had been pinched, which, attracting our attention, she goes on to inform us that "Mr. Bilby," the mild young man, "has got a game," which sounds as if the individual in question had been suddenly seized with some form of epilepsy.

Pilton sees a forlorn hope in Bilby. Bilby is the mouse who comes to the lion's rescue.

Bilby blushes, and says, "Well, it's not much of a game." Being pressed to go into details, he informs us, bashfully,—as though it were something improper which he would rather not

mention in polite society,—that it consists in everyone saying, “Hish!” “Hash!” and “Hosh!” all together.

We don’t see, at first sight, that this is a very exciting game, nor indeed how it can be a game at all, but Pilton joyfully welcomes it as better than stagnation, and evidently considers it to be, at all events, a move in the right direction.

The elderly Ladies regard Mr. Bilby with interest, as a new discovery, and we are all more or less surprised at his, so to speak, suddenly coming out of his pod, and bursting into life with a game.

“You direct it,” says Pilton to Bilby, with an air of importance, and playing off Bilby against young Fisher, who now appears inclined to patronise Bilby, rather officiously.

Thereupon Bilby diffidently apportions the “Hishes,” the “Hashes,” and the “Hoshes,” among us. Three are to say “Hish,” three to say “Hash,” and three to say “Hosh,” and so on. It takes a good deal of arrangement, and some argument and explanation, as to whether the words are to be said simultaneously, or one after the other, and so forth.

These knotty points having been decided, and Peter Dermody having been aroused to a sense of the importance of the occasion, Pilton wishes Bilby to stand on the hearthrug, in front of us all, and give the signal, which he does. Also, if young Fisher, who has nothing whatever to do with this game, beyond playing it, will kindly get off the hearthrug, and get a seat in a corner, anywhere, Pilton will be much obliged. Snub for young Fisher.

Are we ready? Yes. Then, off! Whereupon we all say, “Hish, hash, hosh!” together, as one word, and then stare at one another to see the result. Nothing.

“Is that *all*?” asks Pilton, much disappointed.

“Yes,” answers Bilby, nervously, “that is all.”

“But that’s not a game!” Pilton protests, with evidently a sense of injury.

Poor Bilby seems to be suddenly convinced of this himself. He only returns, “No, I don’t say it’s much of a game, but I thought it would amuse you.”

After this Bilby retires. Triumph for young Fisher. Bilby has strutted his brief five minutes on the hearthrug, and now “is

heard no more"—like the "Poor Player"—which, in my opinion serves any poor player right.

Everyone is irritated with him and his game. Peter Dermod, angry at having been woke up, declares that such an amusement is only fit for an idiot asylum.

However, we've eked out the time. The carriages are announced, the outdoor guests leave, thanking the host and hostess for "a very pleasant evening," and the indoor guests retire for a pipe to the smoking-room, where, after young Fisher has retired, Pilton lays all the blame on *his* shoulders, "because he can be so amusing if he likes, but he wouldn't; and he wouldn't dress up."

When Peter Dermod has gone to bed, Pilton remarks that *he* is not as amusing as he used to be. I apologise for my own shortcomings, and regret my inability to remember "Cockamaroo," which, I am sure, from the sort of vague impression I have of it when I last saw it played, would have caused endless amusement. Everybody regrets that I couldn't think of "Cockamaroo" in time. To-morrow, when I shall have left, Pilton will confide in Mrs. Pilton, and the three young Ladies; how disappointed he is in me, and he is sure to finish by saying—

"I object to people who can do something to amuse, and *won't*." He will then probably add with a deep sense of injury, "Why, he" (meaning me) "remembered a game called Cockamaroo, only he wouldn't tell it."

"When I want a jolly evening, nothing shall induce me to go to Pilton's," says Peter Dermod to me next day, on his way back to town.

* * * * *

I have got two or three more friends to visit. This is fortunate, as there is something the matter with the roof of our Old House at home, where my forefathers, &c., and they are mending and painting. Milburd, being a good-natured wag, will, of course, spread the report that "there's a tile off, *chez lui*;" and at all events, for the present I am roofless. This gives me, as it were, a title to my friends' hospitality.

Happy Thought.—New title, Sir William Roofless. Sounds historical.

CHAPTER XIV.

INVITATION—A NAME—TOPSY-TURVY—ACCEPTED—INCIDENT—SENSA-
TIONAL—SPRIGHTLY SERVANT—LUXURY—POETRY—ARRIVAL.



A LETTER of invitation comes to me from—

“MEADOWSWEET MANOR,
“TRICKLINGTON.

“MY DEAR FELLOW,

“I SHALL be delighted to see you, if you'll only come and take pity on a poor hermit in his cell. We are right away from all amusements—ten miles away from anywhere—so if you can summon up courage to make the venture you are hereby forewarned that you'll have to entertain yourself, the livelong day, as best you can. But come, by all means,

“Yours truly,

“C. MOSTHYN DICKIE.”

Mosthyn Dickie is a good all-round grumbler. I don't wonder at it, with such a name. He starts, as a cart-before-the-horse man. With him everything has gone right in spite of himself. But to hear him talk, to judge by his correspondence, you would think that everything was invariably going as wrong as possible with him.

His name is enough to have put him out of all his calculations in life. There should be a law against the use of a Christian name as a surname. One ought no more to be permitted to use a

Christian name as a surname, than one is able to use a hat as a waistcoat. Any one doing the latter, frequently, would be locked up in a lunatic asylum; and the lunatic tailor would soon be sent for to show the unfortunate man what kind of waistcoat he would have to be fitted with for the future.

Mosthyn Dickie is so evidently Dickie Mosthyn topsy-turvy, that it is quite irritating to hear it, and still more to see it, on paper. When his friends call him "Dickie," it sounds ridiculous,—or ri-dickie-lous,—while to speak of him or to him as "Mr. Dickie," is even more absurd. It is like talking to a canary in a cage. "Well, Mr. Dickie, how are you this morning?" which you expect to hear followed up with a chirrup, and a "Sweet, sweet, swe-e-et!"

All his intimates call him Mosthyn. This sounds all right, but it puts a stranger, so to speak, on entering, on to the wrong scent; for who would suppose that those who call a man "Dickie," and "Mr. Dickie," are his merest acquaintances, while those who call him Mosthyn are his most intimate friends?

How did it begin? Trace the genealogical tree to its ancestral root, and there will probably be found a Richard at the bottom of it. He came over with the Conqueror, or without him, as Richard, simply Richard. His friends called him "Dick." His playful friends called him "Dickon." An eccentric old Norman baron called him "Dickie." This old Norman baron was rich. He quarrelled with his family, left his money and estates to his boon companion, whom he had only known as "Dickie." This fixed the heir's name. Henceforward he and his heirs were Dickies. They went on and prospered, in spite of, as the vulgar phrase has it, or used to have it (and can have it again as far as I am concerned), in spite of "its being all dicky with them."

The above is a hypothetical history of the Mosthyn Dickie family. Some Dickie in the Sixteenth Century married into the Mosthyn family—whose name, probably, owed its origin from some witty King seeing one of his courtiers very lank and meagre, and, like Julius Cæsar, considering lean men as dangerous to the State, he at once designated him as *Most Thin*, and gave him some fine fat lands to subsist on. "*Most-thin*" then became

Mosthyn—and thenceforward a rich, happy family, and stout supporters of Royalty.

[*Happy Thought.*—Write a Hypothetical History of the Origin of English Family Names and Titles. Perhaps, the English families would subscribe largely, to make it worth my while *not* to do it. Either notion's remunerative.]

Of course I accept Mosthyn Dickie's offer.

Here, *en route* for the Manor, I must note what would be sensationally announced in some American papers thus—

AN INCIDENT AT THE STATION.

I am in the waiting-room. I see the bald head and eyes of a short man in a great coat. I see no more of the short man than the bald head and eyes, because he has got his hat off, and is, to put it nicely, using his pocket-handkerchief.

From the bridge of his nose, to the second button of his great-coat, all is enveloped in a silken cloud of mystery, *i.e.*, in pocket-handkerchief. What I do see of him—mentioned above—I recognise. I go up to him with outstretched hand and a smile on my expressive countenance. I am about to say, "Hallo, Von Schmidt,"—that being the name of the individual I expect to find behind the pocket-handkerchief,—when, the curtain being drawn aside, discovers somebody else, a total stranger, who stares at me in a half-frightened manner, as though uncertain what to make of my advance. I suddenly change my front, scowl, as though asking the stranger, "What the dence he means by being somebody else and deceiving me under shelter of his pocket-handkerchief," and walk off, indignantly, by the side-door. That bald-headed stranger, who ought to be Von Schmidt, wouldn't get into the same carriage with me for a trifle.

After this, still in sensational paragraph style, I will describe my next step as

ON THE TRACK.

Which simply means that I get into a comfortable smoking-carriage, and finally arrive at Tricklington Station, where I meet with an

ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME

from one person, whom, of all others, I am glad to see—in fact it is I who give *him* the enthusiastic welcome—for he is a servant from Meadowsweet Manor, who has been awaiting me, in the snow, for the last quarter of an hour. And it has snowed ! It must have snowballed down, so thickly and heavily does it lie on the roads, on the trees, on the roofs, on everywhere. Had the giants taken to snowball the Great Northern Gods, and the Great Northern Gods replied in kind from their Hundred-and-Twenty-four Pounder Snowball Factory and Arsenal, a more damaging result could not well be conceived.

[*Happy Thought*.—Appearance of the Northern Divinity, Thaw-Transformation Scene.]

The dapper and sprightly servant—rendered more dapper and sprightly by the cold—in a long whitey-brown coat, identifies me with the certainty of a detective in plain clothes, and has me out, bag and baggage, in less than no time.

I try to explain as to number of parcels, and where they are ; but he knows all about it. His manner seems to say, “ Bless you. You’re not the first that’s been down here by a many. I know what you’ve got. I know the sort o’ things *you’d* bring, by the look of you. Don’t you bother—I know my work.” And true enough, before two minutes have elapsed, all my things are out, nothing left behind, and we, in a procession of footman, porter, and self, make for the station-door, where there is a pair-horse brougham in waiting, with a coachman, in a fur cape, respectfully delighted to see me. My baggage being provided for—I feel it will be all right, and ask no questions. In I get, and off we go.

From this moment I see I can relieve myself of all responsibility. I feel more than at home, as I lounge back in the pair-horse brougham comfortably, most comfortably rugged and wrapped. The sensation is, “ This is mine ! I am monarch of all I survey ” (I can’t see out of the windows for the steam, which makes them into ground-glass), and emancipated from trouble, or responsibility, the poetry comes out of me thus :—

I'm monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute ;
I know that I've nothing to pay —
A sum which my pocket will suit.

[*Happy Thought*.—Poetry in me is a sort of *Ballon Captif*. The ropes are the responsibilities and troubles. Cut the ropes, and the Poet soars aloft. How about coming down again? Let the gas off. But—well, we must not press a simile so far.]

Mosthyn Dickie's carriage is delicious. We are at the gate of the Manor House. In a few minutes we are at the Mansion itself.

Mansion! Yes, quite a Mansion! It is of the Italian Portico style, and with its steps, pillars, and capitals, it gives you the idea of a Public Library, or Club, having stepped out of St. James's Square, or Pall Mall, or a British Museum Junior which had forwarded itself down here for a little change of air.

Country House! Not a sign of it. That is, according to the received Old English type—the sort of thing, for example, that Mr. Caldecott loves to illustrate, and wherein he excels. But at Meadowsweet Manor there should be a surrounding of Italian gardens, of Signori and Signoritas, with mandolines and guitars, greyhounds stepping daintily with one foot up in the air, monkeys led by black boys, in turbans, silks and satins, and a scowling Italian hiding behind a pillar of the portico, fumbling at a stiletto in his best doublet, while he eyes a young couple in whom he evidently feels the very deepest interest.

This is the scene suggested by Mosthyn Dickie's Manor House. But this picture is for summer, and now the snow is on the ground, except where it has been carefully swept away from the drive and from the steps, which are exactly like those leading up to the British Museum, or the National Gallery, only without the policemen or the sentries; and under the portico above are wide glass doors, more than ever suggesting the idea of some public Exhibition—say, for example, the "Old Masters" at Burlington House—so that I can scarcely refrain from asking the official in plain clothes—the Beadle—whether it is a free day, or whether the admission is by payment; and having resigned myself to this sort of Exhibition idea, I am looking round to see where are the

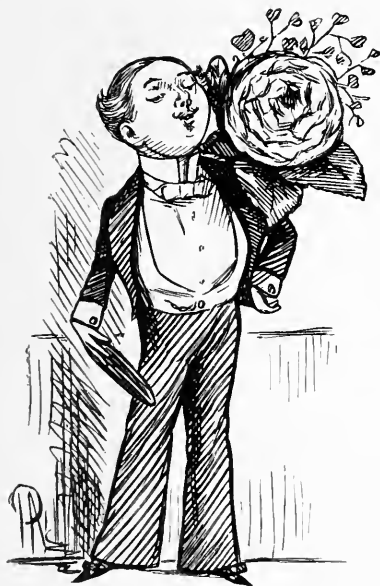
respectable individuals, who, as at Burlington House, live in pews in the hall, and play at pawnbroking all day by giving tickets for umbrellas deposited with them—[*Happy Thought.* My Uncles!]—and where the man who takes the money, and who won't give change, is to be found, when, as a footman takes me out of my great-coat, I hear a hearty voice coming along the hall, exclaiming—

“Bravo! I never thought you'd come in such dreadful weather!” and Mosthyn Dickie has come out of his sanctum, and is grasping my hand heartily.



CHAPTER XV.

AT MEADOWSWEET MANOR—MOSTHYN DICKIE—HIS HEARTINESS—
DEAFNESS—TEA—TYRANNY—VIOLENCE—SUNSHINE—SERVANTS
—HOUSE—AND HOUSEHOLD—QUOTATION—GRUMBLE—ACUTE-
NESS—VIOLENCE—PINS—MRS. POUND—REPLY—HERMIT—CELL.



“MY DEAR fellow!” he exclaims, in a bluff, good-humoured tone, and smiling all over his face, under and all round his grey beard and moustache. “My dear fellow! this is capital of you! Excellent! You’re a trump to come down in such abominable weather.”

Mostyn Dickie is thoroughly hearty. It is evidently genuine; nothing of the *faux-bonhomme* about him.

Happy Thought (a title for a good old hospitable Country Gentleman).—“His Heartiness.”

I observe, that I am only too delighted. He is, I find, a trifle deaf, and looks me steadily and earnestly in the face, as though he suspected me of saying something that I don’t want him to hear. I repeat louder, that I am delighted, most delighted, to have the opportunity of visiting him.

This makes him beam again, and he won’t let go my hand. It seems as if he could never have enough either of my hand, or of staring me in the face. He appears to be trying to convince himself, beyond all possibility of error, that it is myself and nobody else. He frowns on me, always good-humouredly, but, still, with

an air of uncertainty, as though he were saying to himself, "It's uncommonly like the man I expected; but I've been so taken in, lately, by impostors, I'd give a trifle to know if it is really he or not." He swings my hand forward and backward, then shakes it, then wrings it, then repeats, "Well, this *is* kind of you to come," as though he were in some awful difficulty, and I had just arrived in the nick of time to save him.

At last he seems to have made up his mind that I really am the person I've represented myself to be, whereupon he gives my hand a final hearty shake, as though he were saying "Good-bye" to me (in effect he is dismissing me from his mental doubts), and then, just as he is relinquishing my hand, he suddenly seizes it again as if afraid lest, on being released, I should make for the glass door and run away, and says in a tone that evinces the deepest anxiety for my welfare, "Now you'll have something?"

"No," I thank him.

"Quite sure?" he asks, still detaining my hand, and scrutinising me in a way that implies he is accustomed to inconsistency on the part of newly-arrived guests.

He is right. I am *not* quite sure.

"Ah!" he exclaims—it is a very broad "Ah!"—much relieved. "That's right. You *will* have something. Glass of sherry? Brandy-and-soda? Anything you like. Everything's here. What'll you have?"

Evidently, I've got into good quarters at Mosthyn Dickie's. I intimate, modestly, that if a cup of tea can be obtained without trouble—mind, without trouble—

But I have not to say another word. He does not clap his hands, and a thousand ebony slaves appear, as, since my arrival, there have been two or three servants awaiting my commands in the hall, with absolute nervous anxiety.

At the mention of tea, one of them has disappeared, through a side-door, which swings to noiselessly.

"Now, what's he gone for?" asks Mosthyn Dickie, who being, as I have said, slightly deaf, has not caught my expressed wish for tea.

"James has gone for tea, Sir," replies Servant Number Two.

"Eh, what?" exclaims Mosthyn Dickie, spreading out his

hands, and appealing to me in the utmost despair, as if everything in the world had collapsed suddenly, and he had lost his fortune at one fell swoop. "There! Did you ever see such a set of idiots! That's what I'm surrounded by—*Idiots!*" (present company, I hope, excepted). "They can't wait—absolutely can't wait for orders; but just because it's his tea-time, off he must go! I tell them," he continues in a deeply injured tone, "I tell them, when any one arrives, to wait until they know if anything is wanted; but no—off they go"—he is working himself up into a fury—"and once for all, *I won't have it!*"

At this point James returns with the tea, and I am able to explain that this is what he had been to fetch for me.

"Oh," says Dickie, with the air of a man who, out of politeness, has been compelled to receive an excuse, "that's quite another thing. Oh," he repeats, with a sort of vague bow all round, but specially directed towards the hats and coats that are hanging up in the hall, "oh, all right! *Only*," here he thrusts both hands into his trouser-pockets, and turns round full on me as if he were going to put a regular poser to me this time, at all events, "*why didn't he say so?*"

I really have no answer for this. The two Servants—the offending James and another—are still standing there in the hall, but they make no sign; and as I do not, so to speak, hold a brief for them, I am silent, and occupy myself with the tea.

The two Servants are just on the point of withdrawing, when Mosthyn Dickie stops them suddenly and peremptorily. His manner is startlingly fierce, and I tremble lest the men should be involved in another difficulty on my account, in which case they'll go into the Servants' Hall and express themselves in very decided language on the subject of my visit.

Mosthyn Dickie turns to me, frowns, and, in a tone of the most intense earnestness, asks,

"*Have they given you any sugar?*"

These words are given so tragically, as to impress me with the idea that I am listening to a quotation from some Shakesperian tragedy,—perhaps *Hamlet*,—though I don't recollect the line.

So despotic is his whole bearing that, though I don't look at the Servants, as I am facing the stove and they are behind me in the

middle of the Hall, I can fancy them both shaking in their shoes, their hair standing on end (specially if they are comic servants), tremblingly awaiting my answer, which will decide their fate, as, evidently, were I obliged to own that the sugar had been omitted, the Tyrant would instantly exclaim, "Off with their heads!" and there'd be an end of them in a twinkling.

I reply, therefore, a little nervously, I admit—"Yes—thank you—plenty!"

I fancy I hear a suppressed sigh of relief from the two servants.

"*You are sure?*" asks Mosthyn Dickie, with searching emphasis, as though he were examining me on my oath.

"Yes, I'm quite sure. It's very nice," I say; and I drink it, in proof of my assertion, while he watches me narrowly, as if to see whether any irrepressible spasm should contradict my statement. No. After disposing, as pleasantly as possible in the circumstances, of half the contents of the cup, I look round at him, and smile, as I was wont to smile.

"Because," he says, still eyeing me distrustfully, as though expecting me to recant my opinion, and refuse to swallow any more tea, unless it were immediately sweetened;—"because Mrs. Pound *always* forgets either the sugar or the milk, or something. She's got no head—not a bit"—most extraordinary phenomenon Mrs. Pound must be, whoever she is—"she always forgets something, either the sugar—*or* the milk—*or*," he adds suddenly as a climax—"or the Tea!" This so tickles him that he must needs take his right hand out of his pocket to dig me forcibly in the ribs, as though to attract my wandering attention to the point he has just made—and which I notice has highly amused the two servants—and repeat, "*or* the Tea! Eh? Forget the Tea! Ha! ha! ha!" Whereupon the servants, seeing that the storm has blown over, discreetly disappear through a noiseless green-baize door.

Mosthyn Dickie continuing to relish this joke without reference to me, I take the opportunity of looking round the hall to get some further idea of what Meadowsweet Manor is like.

Judging from what I can see of the Italian style, portico and pillars without, tessellated pavement within, polished marble (or imitation) columns, and lofty whitewashed ceilings, ornamented with that sort of fancy-plaster-work which the decorative art at

the confectioners' seems to consider as an indispensable finish to the white-sugared top of a children's twelfth cake,—judging, I say, from the general shininess and polish, I begin to think I am realising the vision of the operative poet who sang

“ I dreamt that I dwelt in mar-able halls,
With vassals and serfs at my si-i-de.”

And I add to myself, that I feel pretty sure I *shall* “ be happy yet.” For it is easy for any one to discover, in less than a quarter of an hour after his arrival in this house, that these sudden outbursts of Mosthyn Dickie's are simply his way, which really alarms no one who is accustomed to them, and that, in spite of all his grumbling, he is absolutely idolised by every dependant on the establishment.

He is a widower, and the lady of the house is, I find, his daughter—Mrs. de Breslin—who, with her two young children, usually reside at Meadowsweet Manor. The people about address her as “ Madame de Breslin,” or simply “ Madame,” and from Mrs. Pound (the housekeeper “ without a head”) I soon ascertain enough of the family history to make it evident to me that the less said about Monsieur de Breslin the better. He is spoken of as “ compelled to travel a great deal on various important foreign missions.”

I have just received this information from Mrs. Pound, the housekeeper, who is the real manageress of the entire establishment, when Mosthyn Dickie enters my room.

“ Ah !” he exclaims, standing stock still in the doorway, thrusting his hands into his pockets, rattling some keys, and sternly eyeing first Mrs. Pound, then myself, as though he suspected some conspiracy on our part. “ Ah ! Well—” here he relaxes for a moment and scrutinises the fire—then he turns to the Housekeeper, “ Are you giving him a good fire, Mrs. Pound ? Plenty of coals, eh ? *Are you quite sure it doesn't smoke ?*”

This last inquiry is given with terrible earnestness, and again impresses me with the idea of my having heard the line before somewhere in Shakespeare, probably *Hamlet*.

Mrs. Pound replies, smilingly, that she is perfectly happy in her mind on all these points. Such an assurance would be to any

one more than satisfactory, coming from Mrs. Pound, who, in herself, is an embodiment of the spirit of tidiness and comfort, and whose voice and manner are those of one of the kindest, motherliest, and most considerate of women.

But Mosthyn Dickie will have his grumble. It's quite enough for him to be the best and warmest-hearted friend, and most indulgent master without showing it. He likes to look upon himself as a tyrant, as a man who *will* "know the reason why" though he never succeeds in obtaining it. His hobby is, that nothing escapes his notice; "Do what they will," he says, as though everyone all round were trying to deceive him from morning to night, "I see it *all*, though they don't think I do."

For instance, he walks up to my dressing-table where every article has been most carefully laid out, and turning on Mrs. Pound, exclaims, as though he were doing an injury to himself by suppressing the violence of the emotion with which the reckless and ungrateful conduct of his Housekeeper has inspired him,—

"*Now*, Mrs. Pound—*there are no pins!*"

Unaccustomed as yet to Mosthyn Dickie, and anxious for Mrs. Pound's position (I am not aware at this moment that she has been in the family for twenty-five years), I hasten to point out at least a dozen pins in the cushion, and to add, that were they not there, it would be no loss to me, as I really do not absolutely rely on pins, either for dressing or washing.

Mosthyn Dickie turns a deaf ear to my plea for Mrs. Pound.

"No!" he exclaims, haranguing me, in a powerful oratorical manner, with his left hand in his pocket, and his right pointing at her, "No! She will *not* put any pins in the pin-cushions. *She won't do it.* I beg and pray of her to do it, *and she won't.*"

"Oh, Sir!" remonstrates Mrs. Pound, quite cheerfully.

"She *won't!*" he continues emphatically; "she won't do anything she's told. She forgets it all. She forgets everything." Then he turns to her: "You've got no head—you know you haven't—except to put a cap on, and trim it with finery"—here

Mrs. Pound smiles complacently ; for she really has the very neatest and quietest cap : and her Master winks aside at me, as though intimating that he had touched her on her weak point, now, at all events.

"Ah, well, Sir !" replies Mrs. Pound, with perfect good temper, as she goes towards the door, "if I'm no use, Sir, you'd better get rid of me."

"Get rid of you !" he exclaims, in utter surprise at such an extravagant proposition—"get rid of her !" he repeats, turning to me ; "why I *couldn't* get rid of her, if I tried ! *She wouldn't go !*"

Mrs. Pound shakes her head, smiles, hopes I'm quite comfortable *now*, and quits the room, not, however, without reminding her master that the dressing-bell has rung, and that he will probably be late for dinner, adding, that Miss Claudine is not at all well to-day, and oughtn't to be kept waiting. With this advice, she disappears.

"Ah !" repeats Dickie to himself, "True ! She's not well. No. Mrs. Pound's right." Then to me, "I don't think you know my daughter Claudine. Madame de Breslin is her married name, but that stupid old idiot, Mrs. Pound, always *will* call her Miss Claudine. She was her nurse, and brought her up. And so" (he finishes in a tone implying utter despairing hopelessness in dealing with Mrs. Pound's denseness on this point) "there it is ! I can't get it out of her head—if she's got a head. Well, well—they're all alike. There it is, and so it is !" And he throws up his hands, as though he were getting rid of everything left and right, and making up his mind to have nothing more to do with the cares and burdens of life, but to go off straight, by the next train to the nearest desert, there to set up for himself as a Hermit in a Cell. At present, however, he only goes down to look after the Hermitage in the Cellar. And a marvellous bottle of that wine we subsequently enjoy.

So the grumbling is only the way of the Master of Meadowsweet Manor. In fact—

Happy Thought—his Manner.

CHAPTER XVI.

MADAME—GUESTS—BOY—CONVERSATION—DINNER—GRUMBLE AGAIN
—PLEASURE.



MADAME de Breslin is a quiet, elegant lady, above the middle height. Perhaps the idea arises in my mind from Mrs. Pound's story, but I fancy I remark a shadow of melancholy that rests, from time to time, on her handsome features until it is chased away by one of the sweetest and brightest smiles it has ever been my lot to see on the face of woman.

Our company to-night consists of Mosthyn Dickie, our host, Madame de Breslin and her daughter Florence, Mr. McAnister, a Scotch gentleman evidently retired from

some business with money—his own, of course—and not intending to go “bock agen”—and a Mr. Denson, a man about fifty, with his son Horace, a handsome lad, dark as a Spaniard, with a half shy, half sulky, dissatisfied air, as though he had been brought down to Meadowsweet Manor much against his will, and would at that moment give a trifle to be miles away. These two last have arrived only a few hours before myself, and they are leaving to-morrow. Mosthyn Dickie possesses, I have always heard, immense influence somewhere—where, I do not know; but within the first few minutes of our meeting in the drawing-room Mr. Denson has informed me, more or less confidentially, that he is looking out for something for his boy,—I find he is always “looking out for some

thing for his boy,"—and that Mosthyn Dickie has promised to do all he can for him; "And," he adds mysteriously, as though I were, of course, in the secret, "you know he can do *something* in a certain quarter." Here he waggles his hands, and nods his head at me like one of the German figures on the top of a bon-bon box. Being evidently supposed to know all about it, I nod and waggle back again, completing the resemblance, on my part, to the bon-bon box figure by observing a discreet silence.

Mr. Denson goes on to inform me, quite gratuitously, that his boy has had an excellent education, and I catch myself replying, "Indeed!" in a surprised tone, which implies that I should not have gathered the fact from the youth's manner and bearing.

"He was at Eton," says his father, proudly.

"Near Eton," interposes his son, sullenly, and with marked emphasis.

"Well," his father resumes, a trifle abashed, but maintaining a smiling countenance, "at a most excellent school near Eton, where they pursue the Eton system, and have matches like the Eton boys, and go on the Eton grounds, and so one really may say he was at Eton."

Of course I am ready to admit he may *say* anything, but I merely bow politely, and observe, "Yes, naturally," which seems to chime in quite pleasantly with Mr. Denson's notions.

"Then," he continues, finding he has got a listener, "he went to a private tutor's, and then he went abroad——"

"Only Boulogne," interposes the lad, surlily.

"Well," returns his father, deprecating the interruption, "that *is* abroad."

"I don't call it so," mutters the boy, sulkily, "it's regular English."

"But it's in France," answers his father, triumphantly, which statement even his son, whose mission is clearly to gainsay and contradict his parent on every possible occasion, is compelled to allow as being geographically true.

"He has studied for several examinations, but I have come to the conclusion that business is the best thing for him," says Mr. Denson, Senior, winding up the subject somewhat abruptly, it having possibly occurred to him that I am about the last person

likely to be able to forward his views as to his son's career in this particular line.

The lad is evidently favourable to any scheme not involving an examination. He seems to be scanning me furtively, as though suspicious of my being an Examiner, in disguise, ready to tackle him with a poser at a moment's notice. On being introduced to me, formally, he shakes hands, as though he had not forgotten the time when he used to hold out his palm for the cane, and, after withdrawing it as rapidly as possible, he stands swaying about, scrutinising the carpet, as if to discover some means of slipping suddenly through a hole in the pattern, and so escaping all chance of being tackled with posers. Mrs. Breslin comes to our relief. She apologises for being so late, and wonders if Papa is aware of the second bell having been rung.

At this moment Papa himself—Mosthyn Dickie—enters in a fuss and a flurry.

"They never told me," (he stands at the door declaring indignantly)—"they never told me. Not a soul ever came to tell me. My dear fellow" (this to Mr. Denson, but addressed to us all as we stand in a semicircle), "I keep a houseful of servants, and not one of them can come and tell me that the dinner is ready!" Then he adds, despairingly, "I don't know what to do! They're all alike!" And, as usual, he throws up his hands, as if life were no longer worth living, and that, all things considered, the best thing to be done is to go to bed and have no dinner.

Mrs. Breslin reminds him that the bells rang as usual; but as he replies to this that he didn't hear them as usual, no one ventures to make any further observation.

The waiting staff consists of a butler and two servants. The table is arranged perfectly. But, somehow or another, with Mosthyn Dickie nothing is right.

After grace he criticises the *menu*. That's all wrong.

"I told that stupid woman"—he is speaking of the cook—"I told her not to give us a *fricandeau*, and she does! I don't know what to do. I can't get what I want! Ah, well, well!" and he tucks his napkin under his chin and takes a spoonful of soup, then pauses, looks round the table, and asks Mr. McAnister if he doesn't taste anything curious about the soup?

"No," Mr. McAnister just finds time to gasp, as he is working hard with his spoon. If there is anything seriously wrong with the soup, it's too late for Mr. McAnister now ; his doom is sealed.

We all pronounce it excellent. Upon which Mosthyn Dickie—who is really highly pleased with our verdict, and who would back his Cook against any in England—assumes an air of astonishment and pity, and says, "Well, I don't know. I hope it's all right. But sometimes it's too hot, and sometimes it's too cold ; and one evening it's flavoured with this, and then with that—I can never depend on her. That's where it is," he concludes, with sad and solemn emphasis ; "*I can never depend on her.*" With which melancholy confession he sets himself steadily to his soup, with the air of a man nobly determined to fulfil an unpleasant duty ; and drain the cup of misery, so to speak, to the last dreg,—which in fact he does, not leaving a drop in the plate, which he pushes violently away from him, with an air of almost utter abhorrence of the thing before him, and giving vent to an "Ah !" expressive of the deepest disgust, he drinks off a glass of sherry in a twinkling, as though to take a nasty taste out of his mouth as soon as possible, throws himself back in his chair, and looks round in a defiant manner, as though saying, "Come what come may, I'm ready for it, whatever it is !"



CHAPTER XVII.

AT MOSTHYN DICKIE'S—AFTER DINNER—HIS DIFFICULTIES—DENSON, JUNIOR—A HAPPY FATHER—THE REAL FACTS—CONCLUSION FOR THE PRESENT.



AFTER dinner the conversation turns on the advantages of the Country over Town. Everyone congratulates Mosthyn Dickie on his being in the Country, which is questionable as a compliment, as his visitors reside in Town.

Mr. Denson—whose son occupies himself in demolishing the dessert in a quiet, but determined manner—observes—

“Well, you must find great benefit from your farm?”

“My farm!” exclaims Mosthyn Dickie, throwing

up his hands, as if in utter astonishment at the existence of any person capable of venturing such a remark, “My farm! Why, my dear fellow, I get nothing from it—*absolutely nothing!*”

Not knowing much about agricultural matters generally, but being always ready to learn, I inquire, in a comparatively off-hand manner—

“But you keep cows, don’t you?”

After saying cows, it occurs to me that I ought to have said “bullocks.” Before I can move an amendment, that the words, “*and bullocks*” be inserted, Mosthyn Dickie retorts—

"Well, my dear fellow, and what am I to get from cows?"

I consider. To reply, "Milk," seems absurd; and yet, what is he to get from cows, if not milk? It can't be eggs; and it certainly isn't mutton. There's cream; but he must have the milk first.

Everyone is silent. Mosthyn Dickie has clearly put a poser. "What is he to get from cows?" Nobody seems to know. Or if everybody knows, no one likes to make the evident answer, "Milk."

Young Denson, Junior, who has just emptied a dish of almonds and raisins, says, sullenly, "Calves!"

His father stares at him, much as Balaam must have stared at his donkey when it gave him a bit of its mind; then he looks round with a supremely proud smile, as much as to say, "There's a boy! Ain't he wonderful! He'll get on—he will! Only give him a chance!"

"Well," returns Mosthyn Dickie, as though not quite prepared to admit the entire truth of the proposition. "Well—yes—calves. And how many calves?"

"Depends on the cows," says Denson Junior, taking a large bite out of an apple.

His father is immensely delighted with his boy. What a career is not before him? What obstacle is there that Denson Junior will not overcome? It is of such stuff as this that Chancellors are made, for Chancellors have been boys once, eaten almonds, raisins, and apples, and been none the worse for it—intellectually.

Mosthyn Dickie surveys the youth through his spectacles. He is pleased—evidently pleased.

"He's right," he says, turning to Denson, (who is immensely gratified, and at once assumes such an air of superiority as is intended to convey that "This is the style of son I bring up—it's all my doing—I'm his clever father—his good, kind, clever father, Gentlemen!")—"He's right," says Mosthyn Dickie—"there *are* calves—lots of 'em. But do I ever see any veal? No. Not a ha'porth! I have to buy my veal. Do I get anything by my calves? Not a penny!"

"But you sell them?" I suggest.

"Sell them! No, *they* sell me!" he retorts. Whereat we all

laugh except the boy Denson, who is now hard at work sucking viciously at an orange. Evidently, whatever young Denson goes in for, he gives *all* his mind to. All his mind is now in the orange.

A shade passes over his father's countenance. In his system of education he has forgotten to instruct his son when to laugh, *with* whom to laugh, and *at* whom to laugh. If Denson Senior could kick Denson Junior under the table, I fancy, from Denson Senior's expression of countenance, he would do it now—with a will.

When we have all recovered, Mosthyn Dickie continues,

"My good Sir"—this to us all collectively, as one man—"I have about fifty cows, and I never get any cream, except what I buy, and then I pay more than any one else for it—and I never get any milk. Somebody buys it and allows me for it—that's what I'm told—but what I'm allowed for it I'm hanged if I know. They tell me my butcher 'allows me' for the calves. All I can see is that he 'allows me' to sell them to *him* for something less than he'd get 'em elsewhere."

"But how about chickens?" I ask, having a vague idea on the subject of poultry generally.

My knowledge is limited to the outside of a shilling book entitled *How to Make Poultry Pay*. Personally I can't conceive poultry paying anything, unless they are a very wealthy sort like Guinea Fowls. But this suggestion would be levity.

"Chickens!" replies Mosthyn Dickie, smiling with quiet contempt at the very idea. "Chickens! I never see a chicken. Never. I've about a hundred and fifty, and I never get any eggs. When I want a fresh egg I have to buy it, and each egg in the country costs me double what it used to in town. Why," he continues, "I never get a spring chicken till nearly Michaelmas day. That's not spring, eh?"

No, he is right, Michaelmas is not spring, and it is the time for geese—not chickens. But I remark at all events in the matter of vegetables the country does offer advantages——

He interrupts me at once. "What advantages?"

Well, on the spur of the moment, I don't know. But say "growing them and getting them fresh."

He shakes his head vehemently. Clearly I know nothing about it. Why of all the deceptive things in the country, growing fresh vegetables is about the most deceptive.

"You can't," he says, "rely on vegetables."

Soil, seasons, frost, blight, insects, birds,—in fact, everything animate or inanimate is against the entire vegetable tribe. I am staggered. If this is so, then a potato is a priceless gem, and its successful growth almost a miracle. Clearly "there is more in Heaven (birds, storms, frost, &c.), and earth (slugs, insects, and soil), *Horatio*, than is dreamt of in my (Cockney) philosophy.

But I remonstrate. "You do grow them, and you don't get them second-hand." It strikes me I never have heard of a second-hand cabbage, for example.

"I *do* grow them," he says; "but I can't get the gardener to give them me when I want them. My potatoes are all old before they're new. And as to cucumbers—it takes him half a year to grow one; and when all the asparagus is finished in London, *then* my gardener triumphantly produces a bundle as a treat."

This does not sound encouraging.

But getting Mosthyn Dickie alone and walking round his farm and about his grounds, and splendid wall-fruit and kitchen garden, where everything is admirably kept—"I don't want 'em *kept*," he says, "I want 'em for use,"—and then I hear quite another tale. Offer him so much down to leave the place, with another ready to go into. Would he accept? Not he. Offer any one of his servants from the bailiff downwards, double the wages to enter somebody else's service, would they accept? Not they.

I see baskets of eggs in the house, pans of cream in the dairy, sheep, cows, bullocks, enough to provide a garrison for six months. Mosthyn Dickie has his grumble—he thinks it does good; in fact, I believe that he—the kindest and most generous of masters—absolutely fancies himself a martinet who has his eye everywhere, and knows, to the fraction of a wine-glass or an egg, what goes on in the house or out of it.

But his plan with his *employés* is really Dr. Arnold's Rugby system with the Sixth Form. They are all on their honour, as it

were. They have an excellent employer, and the youngest servant in the place has been with Mosthyn Dickie at least ten years. But Mosthyn Dickie was born to protest against everything. Fate had called him Mosthyn Dickie, when he ought to have been Dicky Mosthyn—and there's an end of it.

It is the very perfection of a house to stop at—and this being the case—

Happy Thought.—Stop here for the present—and so winter having, I hope, passed away, I conclude this series of *Friends at a Distance*.



FRIENDS AT A DISTANCE.

II. SCOTLAND.

FRIENDS AT A DISTANCE.

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CHAPTER I.

SUMMERY—JOURNEY—MORNING — OBSERVATIONS—BREAKFAST—BILL
OF FARE — STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM — HERCULES — SCOTCH
FARMER — LUNCH—THREE COURSES—DIFFICULTIES—DYSPEPTIC
—LAWN TENNIS.



SUMMARY of
Journey—(which
is the only thing
Summery about
it just now).—
“Stands Scotland
where it did?”
Yes, certainly.
Take the Midland
Train from St.
Pancras at 10.30
A.M., and you’ll
find it, without
a change.

First Morning.
Lovely. Bracing
air. View of
islands, moun-
tains, rivers, and
Ben Somebody—
not Disraeli—in

the distance. The “Ben” something we’re looking at in the
distance is a Big Ben with a vengeance.

Breakfast. Scotland is celebrated for its breakfasts. What will I have? Loch Fine haddocks, very fine haddocks, or Ayr trout, or Clyde salmon, or cold beef, or ham, or eggs poached, or ham and eggs, or eggs boiled, or bacon, or duck, or chicken curry, or broiled chicken, or some tongue, or some braised something, or kижaree?—and, of course, tea or coffee with plenty of cream, and shortbread cakes (hot), or rolls, or buttered toast, or toast unbuttered, or bread-and-butter cut ready to save trouble, or some peculiar Scotch cakes, and some jam or marmalade, and, to finish with, just some fine fresh strawberries and cream.

My breath is almost taken away by the *embarras des richesses*. It will be taken away entirely, if I only accept an eighth of the offers. Allow me to consider. Let me first observe to everyone that it is a lovely morning, and, as an apology for what I am about to receive, so appetising. Everyone agrees with me. I only hope every *thing* will agree with me as well as everybody. Coffee with hot milk and the thickest cream? Yes, please. Haddock, to begin with? Well—yes. And salmon broiled as the *lever du rideau*. To be followed by the comedy of Broiled Chicken, in three Acts. Act I., with an egg. Act II., without an egg. Act III., with a little curry, and a quotation *Curre! curre!* During the *entr'actes*, the toast-and-butter band will perform—(and what will the waistband be doing?)—and the whole to conclude with the laughable farce of Strawberries and Cream. That's my programme, or bill of fare.

What cream, what strawberries! Delicious, luscious, enormous, Scottish Queens. They're too big to be Skittish Queens. I had I confess no idea they were so enormous, until I had smashed them up, and got through half a plateful. I have undertaken a herculean task.

One of the Seven Labours of Hercules should have been to have eaten strawberries and cream. It is an expansive dish.

Happy Thought.—Must go in for lawn-tennis, or rather, must go out for lawn-tennis.

The game of lawn-tennis is a first-rate training for anyone going in for strawberries and cream.

Walk about. Have another look at Ben Lomond, or, as he keeps himself at a distance, and I am a stranger, it would be more

respectful of me to speak of him as Benjamin Lomond. We look at castles in the distance—Castles in Ayr. Discuss the prospect of fine or wet weather. Talk to a Scotch farmer over the hedge. It is one thing to talk to a Scotch farmer over a hedge, and quite another for a Scotch farmer to talk to me. This reminds me of the riddle, "What's most like a cat looking out of window?" and so forth. I can't understand a word of what the Scotch farmer says to me, except when he says "What for no?" which seems to conclude his argument, whatever it may have been, to which I reply politely, by saying, "Yes, quite so," and then I wish him good morning.

On our return from the summer-house, we again look at Benjamin Lomond, and discuss the weather and the crops.

The morning has passed very quickly.

Luncheon.—What will I have?—beef, ham, chicken, tongue, mayonnaise, lobster cutlets, pigeon-pie, salmi of duck, salad, green peas, French beans?—and, to follow, shall it be strawberry and currant tart, or currant fool with cream, or jelly with cream, or tipsy cake with cream, or champagne cup, or claret cup, or hock, and, to finish with, just a few strawberries and cream, some Scotch cake, and a glass or two of sherry

I have three courses before me. More. Can I venture on strawberries and cream just to finish with? Yes. My host says it's only at first you feel the effect a bit when you're not accustomed to it.

Courage! Screw my courage to the sticking point. No doubt about the strawberries and cream being the sticking point. But shall I blench before strawberries and cream? No!—but I shall afterwards—probably. No matter. Nothing like dash when in action! *C'est magnifique! Mais ce n'est pas la guerre.* *À propos* of "dash," perhaps just a dash of liqueur might—ch?

Another five minutes, and only an empty plate is before me. Regrets are vain. One cannot undo the past, but one can unbuckle one's waistband.

"Oh, horror!" as the librettist of an Italian Opera expresses it—"O unhappy one!" . . .

For the first time I ascertain that the fool of a tailor has neglected his duty, and has omitted the waistband. The climate,

here is very bracing, but I want unbracing. I can only "let out" at the tailor.

I wish I hadn't taken that last big strawberry—the *tria-juncta-in-uno* one.

Mem.—It's the last straw-berry that breaks the camel's back. I must bask in the sunshine with a pipe. No lawn-tennis at present, thank you. Presently I'll cut in. "Never again with you my Scottish Queen!" I mentally vow to the strawberries and cream. Then I add, "At all events, not for some time." Feeling that this is rash, I reduce it to a determination not to take so many twice in one day: a few, and then without cream. I am already suffering from a sort of nightmare in the daytime, in a waking sleep.

It is my turn to play at lawn-tennis.

"Now, then!" shouts my partner, "you must run; as we've got to play the winners."

Have we? As far as I'm concerned I shall not disturb their proud position. Fortunately, our lawn-tennis firm—our side I mean—consists of an active and a sleeping partner. The latter myself.

At Lawn-Tennis.—The game is a series of surprises—chiefly to myself. My first uncertainty is to whether I shall hit over the net or not. If I do send it over the net, the next uncertainty is to whether it will fall into the right court. I serve. *Ich dien.* Bless the Prince of Wales.

Surprise the first.—It is over the net.

I feel that I have done my duty, and finished for the day. This excitement is not shared by partner, or the opposition firm.

Surprise the second.—Return of the ball. I hit at it wildly.

Surprise the third.—I have hit it.

Still greater Surprise.—Everyone cries out "Bravo! Fine stroke!" I smile knowingly, and feel inclined to bow in polite acknowledgment. I suppose I've scored something, but no one makes any remark on the subject; and while I am thinking whether I shall run the risk of exposing my utter ignorance of the game by asking anything about it, the ball is flying about.

I didn't even know we had begun again. I make a dash at it——

Surprise again.—Hit it, and up it goes over a tree—miles away, apparently,—perhaps to Benjamin Lomond. Ironical cheers. I explain that “I hadn't an idea I'd hit it so hard,” and I examine the racket, as though the fault, somehow or other, was in *that*.

“The other side!” says my partner; and I find that we have got into a fresh game, or that I've wandered out of my court. Ought I to stop always in one court? Will ask afterwards. I wonder how the game is? Are we winning, or are they? If I knew how the scoring went I should feel more interest in the game. If I could only get excited about it, I could forget the strawberries and cream, and run. As it is, I do not feel excited, and do *not* forget the strawberries and cream, and I don't run.

My partner is running about, playing capitally; I, as the reserve force, am waiting, as it were, to be called out.

I flourish my bat, just to keep up some excitement, and say, “Well played!” in praise of the other's performance. Except for the look of the thing—by “the thing” I mean the racket in my hand—I might be an impartial spectator who has stepped into the court quite by accident. I am doing no good, and very little harm. I am an armed neutrality, practising masterly inactivity.

My partner is working away tremendously—he is gasping. I wonder whether he has been hitting balls that I ought to have taken? He has just made a splendid hit from the furthest end of his court, and I am watching his performance with unbounded admiration, when he cries to me, I think, “Now take it!” and I become aware of a ball jumping up, quite playfully, just in front of me. I make for it. Too late. I only hit the ground. Ironical cheers from the gallery on the lawn. Partner angry.

“You might have hit *that*,” he says.

I explain, humbly, that I thought it was *his* ball.

“What do I mean by *my* ball?” he wants to know, testily; and, before I can further explain my theory (which I find is peculiar to myself), of each person having his own court and not interfering with the other's, he cries out, “The other side!” and I find that I am just in the way when he is about to serve.

The other side, relying on my still remaining the sleeping partner, send me what every one calls a "a nasty one."

Immense Surprise.—I take it, and return it. Great success. I feel, all in a moment, that I shall never be able to do it again, and devoutly hope it won't be returned. Just to give me breathing time.

It is not returned. Thank goodness. I have breathing time, and, so to speak, I breathe again. My partner is pleased. I think we've won the game. No; it's "Dence." Now what the dence is dence?

One of our opponents is called away, and a young Lady—a quiet-looking young Lady—takes her place. She has to serve to me.

Now I shall have a chance. She will probably send an easy one. I prepare to receive an easy one. I am in attitude (there's a good deal in attitude) and she hits. I run forward. The ball is not over the net. Fault.

I am walking a few steps backwards, quite leisurely, so as to replace myself, when, without any cry of "Play!"—it's so unfair not to cry "Play!"—she has served!

Surprise—The ball comes at me. It is no longer a ball—it is an invisible something, whirring like a rifle-bullet through the air! Whizz!—I hit out vaguely and spasmodically. Roars of laughter from the gallery on the lawn. Bravo! "Eh? where is it?" I want to know. My next question is "Wasn't it out?" Not a bit of it. I dread the time when I shall have to stand up again before that young Lady. It is some comfort to be told afterwards that she is one of the best players in the county.

Wishing to be deeply interested in the game I ask what the score is, when my partner replies, "Vantage to us." I say "Oh indeed!" and haven't an idea what he means. I shall find out. But why on earth can't this sort of game be scored simply like "fives"? Why can't the game be fifteen, the players who are "in" to score, their opponents trying to put them out, and no "fault" to be allowed to the "game ball?" I am meditating on this, when my partner shouts out something,—the ball arrives at my toes. I make some extraordinary gymnastic effort, and hit my chin with my bat. How, I don't know. It came up like a spoon.

Happy Thought.—New name for novel, *Cometh up like a Spoon*. To be followed by *Goeth down like a Strawberry*.

"You thought you were taking some more strawberries and cream," observes my partner, sarcastically. "We have lost the game. More than that, we have lost the set."

Last Surprise.—The set! We've played a set! Don't like to ask "How many go to a set?" I fancy I hear someone say that our opponents won five games out of six. Which did we win? The first, I think.

Hostess politely asks me if I will play again. With a great show of self-denial, I say, "Oh no, let somebody else take my place." Offer accepted at once.

"Now," I hear some one remark, "we shall have a good game." I light a cigar, and join the gallery on the lawn.



CHAPTER II.

SECOND DAY—MORE CREAM—CAKES—PROVERBIAL—SHORTBREAD—
 NAMES—LUNCHEON—PARTY—TENNIS—LIFE—LIVING—SLEEPING—
 BOOK—THIRD DAY—A CHANGE—CARE—MACDUFF—TWO EMI-
 NENT INDIVIDUALS—WEATHER SIGNS—REMARKABLE FORECASTS—
 FRIENDS—POINTS OF INTEREST—REPETITION—BEN AND ROBBIE
 —HEARTHSTONE—VIEWS—NIGHT.



BREAKFAST as before. Luncheon as before. More strawberries and more cream. Also cakes. I forgot that this is the Land of Cakes. I shall not forget it again in a hurry. In fact, there's no chance of being in a hurry, *after* the cakes and the shortbread. Why "short-bread?" Because it what they call "eats short"—but lasts long. However, it is short and sweet — shortbread and sweetbread all in

one. Somehow Shortbread sounds like an upholsterer's firm. No ; that's Shoolbred.

We commence the day with a walk to the summer-house, to see if Ben Lomond hasn't disappeared during the night ; and on our return we say, "There's Burrns's Monument." This is a sort of religious duty. After this we can play till lunch.

At lunch a party. After lunch it increases, like many other

parties do after lunch. I feel inclined to "join the Gallery," and watch the lawn-tennis.

Too many strawberries and cream spoil the tennis-player.

Excellent exercise. Difficult to watch. Difficult to score. At present I am bothered by "dence" and "vantage."

Watching first-rate players is a cause of great comfort to me. *They miss. They sky the balls over trees. They hit their chins. They fail to send 'em always over the net. In fact, the better the play the less the hitting, the quicker the scoring, and the shorter the game.*

The best players get themselves into very absurd attitudes. As one of the Gallery, I am immensely amused. I find I know just enough of the game to be a critic. I see clearly what everyone *ought* to have done.

Having played once, I say to myself, "He played no more that day"—which is a quotation adapted; and I think that half-an-hour's meditation on a sofa, or in an easy-chair, with a book, and one's eyes shut, would refresh me considerably before dinner. "Do so, Barkins." I do so.

At dinner, more cream with fruit tart.

After dinner, more strawberries and cream. Last night of strawberries and cream. Feel a little heavy. "There was the weight that pulled me down, O Cromwell." Also quotation. After a course of strawberries and cream, I shan't be much "pulled down," O Cromwell! By the way, did Shakspeare think that Cromwell was an Irishman, when he made Wolsey address him as "O Cromwell"! (*Note for Shakspearian Society.*)

After a short game of billiards, I retire to my room.

Take up a book—*Is Life worth Living?* by Mallock. That is the question—"Is life worth living?" Interesting subject. In the middle of the first chapter, I think I certainly *won't* eat any more strawberries and cream. Every additional spoonful of strawberries and cream weakens the power of resistance in the will. No; strengthens it, I should imagine, for, after a while, there's no more will—it must result in a most determined "won't."

The "Positivist School" wish to show that Life possesses an intrinsic happiness which makes it worth living for its own sake.

Hum!—let me see. Tremendous breakfast in the morning, pipe

at the right time, lawn-tennis, driving, riding, strolling, great garden always open, shooting, luncheon, lawn-tennis, &c., *da capo*—dinner, champagne, claret *au choix*—billiards, music, toddy, bed . . . “*Is life worth living?*”

Happy Thought.—“Is Life worth Living” depends on the Liver. Sum this up, and suggest it to Mr. Mallock with my compliments.

“Is Life worth Living?” I don’t know. I’ll go to bed.

I read Mr. Mallock’s admirable work in bed—that is, four pages of it. I begin to meditate on some of his problems. Don’t think much of Professor Huxley. He shuts his eyes to facts. . . . So will I . . .

Is Sleep worth sleeping? Yes.

Third Day.—Morning. No strawberries and cream, thank you. Shortbread? No, thank you, not this morning, Baker. Will I stroll out and—“See Ben Lomond and Burrn’s Monument”?

Yes, with a pipe. Not a bag-pipe, but a ’bacey-pipe—a baggy-pipe. Scotch joke, registered. “Lay on, Macduff,” which was a good tip of *Macbeth’s*, as *Macduff* beat him, and anyone laying on *Macduff* would have won. But to our stroll.

I am in the country of two celebrated individuals, Robbie Burns—pronounced “Burrns”—and Ben Lomond. I am perpetually being reminded of Burns, and somebody is always pointing out Ben Lomond. When we can’t see Ben Lomond, we are contented with a view of Burrns’s Monument, at ten or fifteen miles’ distance. When it is too hazy to see either, we guess at the spot where each *would* be if we *could* see it.

In the morning. Examine glass. Glass going up, but rain coming down. Weather forecasts in this country appear to be, if rainy in the morning it’s safe to clear up afterwards; but when “afterwards” may be is a trifle vague.

Weather signs, as far as I can gather from natives, are peculiar. When you see a fly lying down in a dusty road, it’s a sure sign of rain. A dog barking all night is another sure sign. When a cock crows in the daytime, it will rain before night. When you hear a clock strike ten very clearly, it’s a sure sign of rain. When you can’t see Ben Lomond fifty miles off, it’s rain to a certainty. When you can see it most distinctly, there’s no doubt about it

going to be bad weather. When there's a mist about Burrin's Monument, it's sure to be going to rain. When the cows get up, and stand about in a field, it's an infallible sure sign of rain: also when they lie down under a tree. The appearance of midges and flies in numbers, betoken a change in the weather for the worse; if the midges bite and the flies sting so as to drive everyone wild, it will rain before morning to a dead certainty: and the only promise of fine weather is when it's pouring, or when it's thundering and lightning, or when there's a drizzle, or a dense mist. Under these last conditions the glass rises, and everyone is hopeful. But when the weather is fine, and the sun shining, then we all go about examining the weathercocks, looking at Burns's Monument, and shaking our heads at Benjamin Lomond in a nervous, anxious manner; for when it is a downpour we know the worst, and hope for the best, but when we get the best, we know that any change must be for the worse.

After breakfast my host suggests walking up to the summer-house. By all means. He takes glasses with him, as if we were going to the races. When at the summer-house, he adjusts the glasses, and scrutinises the details of the country as carefully as though trying to detect unfriendly Zulus concealed behind the hay-cocks in the mealy-cloverfields. I watch him anxiously. He is looking about for somebody or something. I am silent. Presently he smiles with joy. "There he is!" he cries. "You can see him!" And he hands the glass to me.

"See whom?" I ask.

"Ben Lomond," is the answer. "There he is!" And he directs my sight towards the spot.

Yes, there is Ben Lomond—a "Big Ben" of Scotland. I shouldn't have picked him out as a celebrity at this distance, if he hadn't been pointed out to me. [*Happy Thought.* Good subject for a "Celebrities at Home" paper—"Ben Lomond chez lui."]

"Can't see him very clearly to-day," says my host, with a tinge of melancholy in his voice, as though he were afraid that Ben Lomond had got tired of Scotland, and had left the place quietly during the night. "'Fraid there's going to be a change in the weather!"

I return him the glasses, and he has another look at Ben

Lomond, to ascertain if he really *is* there. He is. He hasn't gone away.

Then, with an attempt at getting up some fictitious excitement in Ben, I ask for the glasses again, as I want to have another look at him.

This pleases my host, I am sure, who is fond of Ben, as a sort of pet to be shown to guests.

"He looks well," I remark.

"Yes, he does," says my host, much gratified, as if the thriving condition of Ben Lomond was due to his peculiar system of feeding him.

"What's his height?" I ask, in a tone implying the deepest interest in Ben, as one might express for a tall lad who was outgrowing his strength.

My host is a little hurt by the question, for it turns out that Ben Lomond—*his* Ben—is not by any means the tallest in Scotland, there being at least three other Bens above him. However, Ben turns out to be about three thousand two hundred feet, and, as I am as pleased with this estimate as I should have been had I heard he was twenty thousand, the smile returns to my host's countenance, and he takes another look at Ben through the glasses with an anxious expression, as if he were making quite sure that he had not done Ben an injustice by understating his height—perhaps leaving out one of his numerous feet.

"No," he murmurs, more to himself than to me, as he lowers the glass—"that's it. Yes; he's about three thousand two hundred feet." He says this in a decided tone, as the result of his having just measured him with his eye, and he returns the glasses to their case.

We go back to the house. On the terrace he points out a spire in the distance, visible to the naked eye—Burrns's Monument. We see it too clearly. Sign of rain.

Luncheon.—Several guests. Elderly Gentleman asks me if I've been in these parts before? No, never.

We walk out together afterwards,—that is, the Elderly Gentleman and myself. He takes me apart, and, as if he were going to tell me a secret. We light a cigar, and walk up the plantation.

He is evidently bursting to impart some confidence to me. Perhaps a scandal about our neighbours. I do not notice that we have entered on the path that leads to the summer-house. He has been asking me all the way along whether I know this person and that person. Evidently a scandalous story coming, which will be most amusing.

We stop at the summer-house.

He takes my arm. His manner becomes most confidential. I didn't catch his name when he was introduced, but I have a vague idea that his name was something like *Hearthstone*; but I do not risk it. I don't address him as *Hearthstone*; I only think of him as *Hearthstone*. Being a Scotchman, of course he is *The* *Hearthstone* of *Hearthstone*, and none other genuine.

Hearthstone of *Hearthstone* takes my arm and draws me to the side of the summer-house. He's going to tell me—I feel sure of it—of some awful crime committed on this spot,—a legend, with a scandal and a ghost in it.

"Yes," he begins, slowly, and I am all attention—"where we are standing——"

"Yes," I say, encouragingly, catching his tone.

"Where we are standing," he continues, "you can just see—between those two trees right in front of us——"

"Yes," I reply, nodding my head at the trees just a few feet from us, which probably mark the spot where some dreadful deed was committed.

"Well—between those trees," he goes on deliberately, and now raising his right hand, slowly, and shading his eyes, and once more I am all attention—"yes—between those two trees—straight before you——"

"Yes——"

"Well—that's *Ben Lomond*!"

I feel as if I had been awfully sold. I look at him, to see if he is in earnest. He is—terribly in earnest.

Not liking to hurt his feelings, I say, "Yes, I see it." Then I add, presently, "I saw it this morning."

"Ah!" he says, not a bit chagrined or disappointed. "Of course *Allison* showed it you."

"Yes, he did."

We return. Hearthstone of Hearthstone leads the conversation on to various topics, chiefly sporting, and all interesting as novelties. Before reaching the house he stops, as though he were a pointer on the track, and, after a brief pause, observes in rather a subdued tone, as though uncertain as to how I am going to take the remark.

"You can see Burrns's Monument from here. There it is."

I reply, "Yes, there it is."

"Ah!" he returns, quite cheerfully, "Allison will have showed it you this morning."

Yes; my host did show it me this morning.

Hearthstone of Hearthstone is satisfied. Dinner. We are all satisfied.

We stroll out.

A lovely night when the stars shine bright, and the moon sheds her light, &c., &c., when, in fact, everything is conducive to poetry, specially a good digestion as a basis, and I am standing on the terrace—as we all are—smoking.

The others are chatting, and I am silent. I am thinking of the starry firmament, of "Is life worth living?" of strawberries and cream, and other sublime subjects, when a voice exclaims,

"By Jove! I didn't think it was possible!"

All are startled. What is it? A gathering of the Clans? A descent of the Highlanders on the Lowlanders? An explosion of a case of whiskey?

No. The speaker is a Johnstone of Johnstone; and I inquire anxiously what may be the matter.

"Oh, nothing," he replies. "Only—if you stand exactly *here*"—and I move from my place, and take some pains to place myself exactly there—

"Well?" I ask, expecting an *Aurora borealis*, or something marvellous.

"Well," he goes on, extending his right arm, "by this light you can just see—Ben Lomond."

"Ah! Yes. Thank you. Very interesting." Only if I look at Ben again, I'm—— But no matter.

Carriages. Guests depart. Host sees me up to my room.

Everything comfortable. Quite. He goes to the window. The blind is up. He shakes his head sadly.

"Going to rain to-morrow?" I ask, cheerily.

"No," he replies, "I don't think so."

Then why shake his head so despondently? Well, he had told them to give me another room—not this.

"Anything the matter with this?" I inquire.

"Oh, no, it's all right," he returns. "Only"—he adds, regretfully—"you can't see Ben Lomond from the window. Good night." And he retires.

[*Happy Thought.*—Then it's a bad look-out for Ben Lomond.]

I open *Is Life worth Living?* Commence reading. Knock at door. "Come in!" My host's head appears. He has quite forgotten to tell me that my window commands a splendid view of Burrns's Monument. Oh! Much obliged to him. Good night. I shall dream of Ben Lomond and the Monument.



CHAPTER III.

VISITS—GROUNDS—BEN AGAIN—THE MONUMENT—DA CAPO—FORTUNES—MACMILLIONAIRES—MORE BEN—EXTERIOR—INTERIOR—VIEWS—LANDSCAPE GARDENING—DRIVE HOME—PROSPECTS—GROUSE—MALLCK'S BOOK AGAIN—MORNING—TAM—SOUTER.



NEXT morning I take the initiative. I point out Ben Lomond and Burns's Monument to my host. I know exactly where to find them, and, so to speak, I can put my hand on them at a moment's notice,—that is to say, from these grounds ; but, away from here, I am always being introduced to either Ben or the monument, or both, as

something quite new which I oughtn't to miss on any account.

We pay visits, and see beautiful grounds and magnificent houses. No matter where I go, people, perfect strangers, with the kindest possible intentions, take me into various parts of different grounds, and, always confidentially, with a sort of implied compliment that this is a treat they wouldn't trouble themselves to give *every* visitor, they say, "Look ! from *here* you can see Ben Lomond !" And a little while after, "There ! do you see that spire-looking thing in the distance ?" "Yes." "Well, that's Burns's Monument."

Nobody thinks much of anyone's place if it doesn't command a

view of Ben Lomond or the Monument, or both. As for the latter, it is like the Crystal Palace—there is no getting out of sight of it; and unlike Ben, it almost defies the variations of haziness.

The Isle of Arran come next in the list, but as an object of interest it is not, so to speak, within several miles of either Ben or the Monument.

After a week of it, when anyone comes up to me mysteriously, and wishes to take my arm in a confidential manner, and walk me off to a distant part of the grounds, I at once, and boldly, say to him,

“Look here! Is it anything about Ben Lomond, or Burns’s Monument? Because if it is, I’ve seen ’em both, and know all about ’em.”

I am becoming callous. I can’t be caught even by an excited stranger in a trap—I *should* say I can’t be caught in a trap by an excited stranger (I mean as we are driving in a trap)—calling out, suddenly, “Oh, look!” I never turn my head. I shake it, and simply, but firmly, reply, “I know. Ben Lomond, or Burns. It won’t do with me.”

I’m not to be taken in. Catch a weasel asleep, and show him Burns’s Monument!

More luncheon and tennis-parties. The hospitality is something delightful. Everyone lunches and dines with everyone else, and invitations are flying about right and left. As a visitor I find myself quite at home. Better than merely “at home,” as if I were at home I shouldn’t be doing this. The conversation is general, and is on the turn-and-turn-about principle. Those who are not playing tennis discuss those who are, and so each party has its innings of play and talk. Highly instructive.

“From information I receive” I gather that no one who hasn’t sixty thousand a year can live in Scotland—or, at least, in this part of it. At this present moment the united fortunes of the four sets engaged in lawn-tennis amount to, as far as I can compute, about five millions. A monthly account of the residents in this fortunate Isle might be called *Macmillionaire’s Magazine*.

I am introduced to a young lady—Miss Ferguson, of Arkiltree. I mean that it sounds like “Arkiltree,” though I should be, and am, puzzled how to spell it. I notice that everybody is Somebody *of* Somewhere, and that Somebody of Somewhere invariably speaks

with a sort of contemptuous pity of a Somebody of Somewhere Else who happens to possess the same name. You are either *The* Somebody of Somewhere, or *A* Somebody of Somewhere, or, with a sudden and startling drop, *The* Nobody of Nowhere. *Additional Note*—that most of the names are pronounced either as if the person speaking were cracking a nut and talking at the same time, or trying to struggle against being choked, or suddenly interrupted by a sneeze.

"She's a millionairess," whispers Captain Macdonald to me, alluding to Miss Ferguson of Arkiltrie, and accompanying the information with a friendly nudge and a wink, evidently implying, "Go in, and win." Neither of us can go in and win, but I thank him for the hint, which was well intended. We chat.

Have I been here before? No, I've not. Do I play tennis? Only a little. Don't I think it very nice having this seat on a bank so as to see the games going on below? I do. It is an excellent position. It is beautiful weather for lawn-tennis, isn't it? It is: charming. I suppose Miss Ferguson plays a great deal? Oh, yes. She often comes over here, too. It's a nice drive, and such a beautiful place. It is.

"Yes," she says, and suddenly rises. I follow her example, being under the impression that she is inclined for a *tête-à-tête* stroll in the grounds. No; she is shading her eyes with her folded fan, and is, I fancy, watching the game.

"Yes," she exclaims, "you can!"

"What?" I ask, looking about.

"You can see Ben Lomond from here."

Then she resumes her seat. I believe there's a conspiracy to show me Ben Lomond. I ask her if Burns's Monument is visible. Dangerous ground. She doesn't like my tone in alluding to Burns. If I had been "going in to win," according to Captain Macdonald's advice, this remark would have settled my haggis—so to speak with a little local colour.

Miss Ferguson of Arkiltrie takes her turn at lawn-tennis. I talk to Captain Macdonald of Monteith—I think it's "Monteith"—at all events, it sounds like some "*teeth*" or other—who repudiates all connection with the Macdonalds of Drumrick—and I am on a wrong ground again. However, we pull together, so to

speaking, on the subject of a gentle tonic composed of one part brandy to three of soda, and we enter the house.

Our hostess, at whose place we are spending the afternoon, invites me to view the orchids. Charming! splendid colours, and fantastic, elf-like forms. They remind me of those fairy pictures of Dicky Doyle's, where the little tiny atomies are riding on petals, and playing hide-and-seek in the flowers. Wonderful models for a transformation scene by Mr. Beverley. We pass on to another house—tropical plants. Am I fond of flowers? Very. She supposes I often visit the Botanical in London? Rarely: but I will. The hostess learns that there is a prize for Landscape Gardening. I believe there is. "It is quite an art," she adds. "It was a very clever landscape-gardener who planned this part of the grounds, and chose this spot for the Tropical House." "Excellent," I say, and am about to enlarge on the luxury of being able suddenly to change, as it were, from Scotland to India without taking more than a couple of steps, when she interrupts me with—

"Yes, isn't it? And so clever, too, to keep Scotland before you while you sit under an Indian palm!"

"I don't quite see how he has accomplished this," I say, deferentially.

"No?" She rejoins, highly pleased, "You wouldn't at first, but if you look between these two large plants which form a sort of frame, you'll see—there—you see it now—that's Ben Lomond!"

And she is triumphant. I don't like to ask anything about the Monument—Burrns's, I mean. I subside. This Ben is becoming to me a sort of pantomime mountain perpetually exclaiming, "Here we are again!"

Allison says he'll drive me home by a different route, through some lovely scenery. I stipulate that if Ben Lomond or the Monument is visible, neither shall be pointed out to me.

Agreed. I am happy.

Lovely evening drive. Promising sunset. Mist rising.

Allison is silent about Ben and the Monument, but falls back on the Isle of Arran, which is just visible in the distance.

We trot on, enjoying everything in the balmy air and delicious silence.

"Fine day to-morrow?" I ask.

Allison shakes his head. He is uncertain. Why?

"Well," he says, "you can see Ben Lomond so clearly to-night: and, if you look——"

No, no! I'm haggis'd if I do.

I know what's coming. "If I look, I shall see Burns's Monument."

No, no! Drive on, Macduff!

Captain Macdonald of Monteith discusses with Allison of Dumfraser the grouse prospects. The latter is afraid "the birds will be very wild." This seems nothing but natural. I should be uncommonly wild if I were going to be shot at. As a grouse on the twelfth, I should quote Mr. Toole, and say, "It does make me so wild!"

The Captain wants to know if I am "going out on the twelfth." I reply, that, as at present advised, I have no intention of "staying in" on the twelfth. If I do "go out," I do not think the grouse will have much cause for alarm. They certainly need not be wild if they only know I am coming. Allison informs us that he has had some excellent accounts from the moors.

[*Happy Thought* (for Stock Exchange).—Better accounts from Moors than from Turks.

Thoughts on Lawn Tennis by Somebody who's "not so young as he was," and who is no longer a racketty fellow.—Forty's the deuce. Fifty's the deuce and all. At forty, if it's still "'vantage to you," you're lucky—or forty-nate. At fifty the game's over. (Put these down on retiring to rest, and call them, instead of *Young's Night Thoughts*, which were very heavy, *Young's Night-Light Thoughts*.)

Happy Thought on seeing a Young Lady forcibly return a ball just over the net, before it had touched the ground—

"When lovely woman stoops to volley——"

I don't know the remainder of the quotation, but supplement it with—

What *can* her male opponent do!]

Before retiring to rest, take up William Hurrell Mallock's book,

Is Life worth Living? What would the grouse answer to this on the twelfth? Don't think much of Huxley, don't think much of Dr. Tyndall think less and less of anybody sleep, gentle sleep *Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle* out, out, brief candle *extinguo*.

Plan for Next Day, if fine.—Look at Ben Lomond and Burns's Monument in the morning, immediately after breakfast. Ben and Burns rather hazy. Evidently been out all night. We drive over to see the Yeomanry shoot the Militia, or *vice versa*.

Part of the practice is that the Yeomen are to ride a certain distance at full gallop, jump off, shoot something or somebody, jump on their horses, shoot *on* their horses, then, in taking a fence, be perhaps shot *off* their horses.

I see the Yeomanry riding at a tremendous pace. I get hold of a military man, and ask him what they're doing. He is not quite certain—in fact, at first he is unable to see if they are doing anything until he gets his glass in his eye, when he informs me that the enemy are supposed to be advancing from the right, and the cavalry, he adds, are manœuvring. The “manœuvring” appears to me to be the simple process of scudding away as fast as they can lay legs to the ground, in the direction of the left, when the enemy are only supposed to be advancing from the right. I don't like to express my opinion, as a civilian, boldly to the military man by my side, but this manœuvring appears to me to be uncommonly like practising how to run away when the enemy's coming. It's what I should do myself, I've no doubt, in actual warfare, but I shouldn't require any practice. Still, it's a pretty sight, and I am informed that “the retreat is masterly.” We adjourn to take a tonic. There is a good deal of dust, a great smell of sulphur, and a refreshment-tent, to which we make a masterly retreat—treating and retreating every half-hour. I believe that the day's festivities are to finish with a grand torch-light procession in honour of Burns's next centenary.

There's always something going on somewhere in honour of Burns. Dinners in commemoration of Burns's birthday. Breakfasts with the same object. A great Cheese Show for the benefit of the Burns Statue at Kilbannock. Grand Cake Contest given

by the MacDougal trustees, the proceeds to go towards erecting a statue of Burns on the first vacant spot.

* * * * *

This morning—after one strawberry and no cream (nothing like diet)—Allison suddenly says,

“Would you like to——”

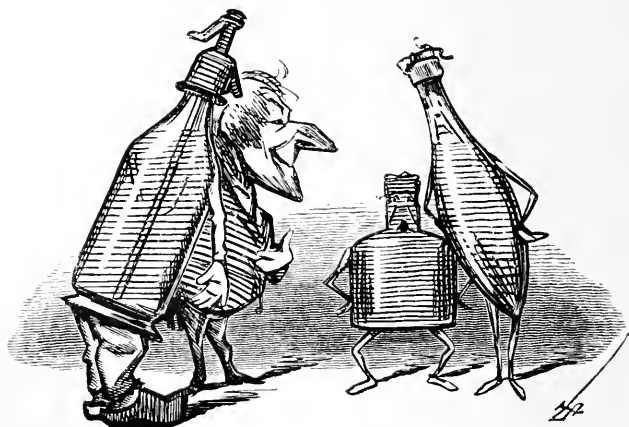
“See Ben Lomond?” I at once interrupt him.

“No,” he replies, “it’s——”

“Burns’s Monument?” I say immediately. “I’m sure it’s one or the other.”

I’m right. It’s the other.

They are going to unveil a statue to-day, and *Tam O’Shanter* and *Souter Johnie* will be in full force. *Ne Souter ultra crepidam*. Don’t let *Souter Johnie* take more than he can carry. He can just tak’ a wee drappie i’ th’ ee, but he munna be aye drarm drinkin’. Yes, by all means let’s go and unveil a statue. “A chiel’s amang ye,” &c. We start—*Souter Johnie*, *Tam O’Shanter*, and the chiel’.



CHAPTER IV.

A CEREMONY—UNTIMELY JEST—COMMENCEMENT—CAKE AND WINE—
 STRUGGLES—HONOUR OF BURNS—BELL—FUNERAL—APOLOGIES
 —SPIRIT—THE TRADES—GENIUS—PRIVATE CHARACTER—THE PRO-
 CESSIONISTS—OUTLAWS—COSTUME—SOUTER—TAM—CEREMONIAL
 —READING—SPEECHES—MASONIC—BAND—INTERRUPTIONS—
 THE MEMBER—ORATION—CEREMONY CONCLUDED.



WE ARE full of Burns. Burns's Monument is in the distance, and inside it is Burns's Statue, wrapped up as though they were afraid of his catching cold. He is to be unveiled to-day. Of course somebody says that "he hopes the covering will come off at the first pull, so that there may be no *un-a-vailing* efforts." But somebody is frowned down as this is no joking matter.

Everyone talks of Burns. As we drive along to the town we pass waggon-loads of festive people, bonnie lassies, and their chields—all, so to speak, going on about Burns.

The town is crowded. There is to be a monster procession of the trades, and crafts, and guilds, and societies—from Freemasons to Foresters, all represented. Refreshments have already begun at the hotels, public-houses, eating and drinking houses, in honour of Burns.

With difficulty we enter the Town-Hall. It is crowded. There is open house for everybody, and everybody appears to be taking advantage of it, in honour of Burns.

On the tables are cakes of all sorts and sizes, principally of the sponge kind, quite new, canary yellow inside, and light brown without. Fresh and filling. Everyone is talking energetically, everybody is explaining everything to everybody else, and all mouths are full of Burns and hunches of cake. So much cake, and such huge cakes, I never saw. When a cake appears, which happens every five minutes, there is an immediate rush for it by every one in its immediate vicinity.

At first I withdraw in order to allow the elders to "cut in;" finding, however, that I am losing by this politeness, and that there is no chance of any sustenance for another three or four hours, I make a gallant and dashing descent on a waiter with a cake. I am a foraging party, and I intercept the supplies that are going into the front room. Waiter makes a faint show of resistance, but yields, and I retire with the spoil, of which I have only time to take a modest slice, before it has been demolished by rapacious cake-eaters. One cake, two feet high, made in a jelly-mould pattern, is placed on a table by a struggling waiter, and disappears in less than no time. It has been pounced upon by Town Councillors in black coats and white ties, and visitors.

Everyone has a glass of something in one hand and a slice of cake in the other. The "something" is either whiskey, sherry, brandy, or port—the spirits, of course, with water; if it weren't for the water, there would be *Burns on every tongue* with a vengeance.

The white ties and the black coats, and the cake and sherry, at first suggest the notion of a funeral, without the gloves and weepers. There is something funereal, too, in the idea that all this festive cake-eating is "to the memory of Burns." We seem to have

"Come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him."

Suddenly, a deep-toned bell takes to tolling at regular intervals. Whether this is an accident, or a signal, I don't know, but the

effect is solemn, and more than ever suggestive of a funeral, or an execution. Perhaps it means that the artist has just executed the statue.

What I specially notice in all remarks about the great Robin Burns is that everyone apologises for him. His genius is taken for granted, and scarcely alluded to, but the shortcomings of his private life seem to demand perpetual excuses. Burns undoubtedly represented the spirit of the people, and the spirit of the people is whiskey.

But that was in his jovial moods, when his genius was making a night of it among the drinkers of the New Lights, which Robin had exchanged for the Auld Lights of other days that had not yet faded. Because other folks were virtuous, were there to be no more cakes and whiskey for Robin?

The popular view of Robin Burns is inscribed, as a motto, on the car of the Carpenters, or Butchers, or one of the trades. I don't distinctly make out which it is—perhaps the Top Sawyers: "*Robin was a Rantin' Rovin' Roarin' Boy!*"

When the Rantin' Rovin' Roarin' Boy was suffering from the effects of to-morrow's headache, then his genius inspired him with the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and so balanced the account. He had a sober genius, and a drunken genius, and was perpetually between the two, like Garrick in the well-known picture, between Tragedy and Comedy. But by whichever inspired, the sober or drunken, the works are inspirations, powerfully good or powerfully bad, as it might chance.

Tam O'Shanter and *Souter Johnie* were a couple of drunken blackguards, for whom every Scotchman has more than a sneaking kindness. Their faults are to be pardoned because they drank much.

To-day the statue of Burns is erected in honour of his genius, and not in honour of his private character, to which any allusion, in connection with this celebration, seems to me entirely out of place.

Thirty thousand, and more, are here to honour Burns, the exciseman, in whose memory thousands of pounds have been spent, and to whom, living, an appreciative country barely afforded

a subsistence. The dead lion of Scotland is in far better condition than was the living dog.

Here are the Freemasons in all their glory of aprons, and signs, and tokens, and squares, and sashes, and hammers, and mallets, and ribands, and jewels, and other insignia. They walk along in procession, trying to look very mysterious, as though not a gallon of whuskey should force their secrets from them. Here are Worshipfuls, and Deputy Worshipfuls, and Masters, and Past Masters, and Junior Wardens, and Senior Wardens, and Deacons with trowels, and Tilers with their tiles on, and a band in full blow—all in honour of Burns, who was himself a convivial craftsman.

Then there are the Carpenters, with a triumphal car, in which is one of the trade at work, in honour of Burns, who wasn't a carpenter.

Then come the Butchers, mounted on saddles of mutton, with drawn bills in their hands—though these ought to be carried by the Bankers; then the Firemen, with their hose ready to extinguish the fire of genius, in honour of Burns, or should the necessity arise, to put out the speaker in the middle of his address; then the Gardeners, in honour of Burns, with bunches of the flowers of poetry, and the Printers, with a car representing a press, and attended by a Printer's Devil correcting a clerical error, in honour of Burns and the New Lights; then the Foresters, in russet boots, large hats, and feathers, green velvet tunics, and the regular "penny plain, and twopence coloured" costume of the merry days of "*Bold Robin*"—not Burns, but *Hood*—poets both, by the way. *Friar Tuck* is out of it, but here is *Maid Marian* in a sort of fancy Kilmarnock bonnet and a gorgeous riding-habit of pink and scarlet; and here, too, is *Little John*, whom I can't distinguish from *Robin Hood*; and the popular outlaws are all doing their best to keep up a gay and gallant appearance while bestriding unpleasantly restive steeds, whose sudden movements cause an expression of brief but sharp agony on the countenances of the bold outlaws, who for the first time seem to be doubtful as to whether theatrical pink "fleshings" are quite the most comfortable, or most durable, costume for an equestrian. If they have ridden from Sherwood Forest, I pity them.

Here are two low comedians, from some theatrical company, dressed as *Tam O'Shanter* and *Souter Johnie*, from whom great things are expected, but who do nothing at all, and look very much as if they were wishing they had confined their make-up to their own stage, and had not come out as a sort of advertisement which won't have much effect on anyone.

We all gather about the Statue, from which the vast crowd is separated by ropes and rails.

The Ceremonial commences.

Somebody reads something to the Provost, who, in return, reads something to him. These proceedings are of so strictly a private and confidential character, as far as the general public is concerned, that the theory generally prevailing outside the mystic circle of six feet in diameter, is, that the officials are reading Burns's poems to one another—perhaps for a prize. Then somebody else reads something else—another poem, perhaps—which is replied to. Official-looking papers are handed about to flurried people, who appear astonished to get them, and who, having got them, don't know where to put them.

The questions, "Who's that?" "What's *he* doing?" "What's going on now?" are general. The Ladies up above, near the Statue, smile on everybody, and try to interest themselves in the proceedings by guessing at what it all means. To the majority of the spectators the entertainment is a sort of open-air Dumb-Crambo played at by the Provost, the Town Councillors, and somebody on a chair.

The mysterious personage who has taken the chair, not as a formal proceeding, but because he really wanted to sit down, is the Member of Parliament, whom the officials on the steps are doing their best to keep hidden until the proper moment, when he is to be produced as a sort of *coup de théâtre*, which is intended to take the people as much by surprise as does the ring which the conjuror finds in the centre of an orange. He is the trump-card of the Festival pack: his eloquence is to be like the brilliant bouquet of fireworks which brings to a splendid climax a *fête* at the Crystal Palace.

He is kept back not to be caught sight of by anyone but the exceptionally privileged, who, on being introduced, shake

hands with him, as though he were going on a long and dangerous voyage, and not likely to return. This shaking hands with an orator who is about to address a crowd, seems to suggest the idea that we are taking leave of him because he may ramble in his discourse, and wander to such an extent that we may never see him again.

At the right moment the sitting M.P. rises, and is shown to the people, when an energetic fugleman gives the signal for a cheer, which signal other fuglemen below obey and reply to. The result is a hearty cheer from at least five hundred out of the thirty thousand, of whom the remainder, being still in a state of uncertainty as to what's happening, think that something must have gone wrong, as what they have come to see is the Unveiling of the Statue, and the Statue is still covered up, as if the family were out of town.

Then comes a cry in the vernacular, "Up wi' the Hippen!"—meaning, "Raise the Curtain!" and equivalent to *Hamlet's* impatient exclamation to the poor player, "Leave off thy damnable faces, and begin!"—which rather disturbs the gravity of the officials, and testifies to the growing impatience of the assembly. Taking the hint, they proceed to business, cutting short several other persons with documents all ready, who thereupon pocket them with an air of deeply offended importance.

Now silence is demanded for a prayer by the Masonic Chaplain. The demand is at once complied with by the Freemasons' Band mistaking the signal, and striking up a tune closely resembling "*He's a Jolly Good Fellow!*" which, in any circumstances, can scarcely be considered an entirely devotional air.

The band, having their eyes firmly fixed on their music, and their lungs hard at work, are with difficulty silenced, excepting, however, the big drum and cymbals, who, having got into a sheltered corner under the steps, where ignorance of the whole proceedings is their bliss, keep it up between them in fine style, until they are absolutely collared by the infuriated conductor, and the tune shaken out of them, when they subside sulkily.

And now we are ready for the Masonic Chaplain.

He raises his hand and delivers a Masonic Prayer, in which

there are a few sly hits at Burns's private life, with an apology for his weaknesses, which, considering the occasion, strikes me as coming a little late, and being rather more than usual out of place.

However, only about twenty people, of whom I happen to be one, quite close to the Chaplain, hear what he is saying, and the other twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and eighty people, about and below, are perhaps under the impression that the gentleman with his hand up is trying to pull the covering off the Statue.

Then the band is called upon again, and reluctantly re-commences where it left off. Once more they're wrong. They were asked for the "*Old Hundredth*," and they have resumed "*He's a Jolly Good Fellow!*" or whatever the "Masonic Anthem," of a very rollicking description, might have been. But I suppose the Masons know best, and doubtless they possess some authoritative tradition for "*He's a Jolly Good Fellow!*" having been played on the opening of Solomon's Temple, with Hiram of Tyre as conductor of the orchestra.

Then the Member of Parliament, not yet entirely visible to the crowd, pulls a string, and down comes the drapery, discovering not only the Statue, but somebody who had been hiding behind the Statue, and who now slips down hurriedly and hurts himself. Immense cheering.

Then the Provost and the officials crush themselves into as small a space as possible, in order to show the Member of Parliament to the people below, and to get well out of reach of any consequences of his oratorical energy. More cheering, led by the fugleman.

Then the Member of Parliament, holding on tightly with the grip of a drowning man to the stone parapet in front of him, waves his right arm aloft, sways himself to and fro, and with exhausting effort, pitches his voice so as to be distinctly heard—well, say within a semicircle of twenty yards to the farthest point. If he has any voice left to-morrow, I'm a Dutchman. He literally vibrates under the exertion, and seems actually to perspire through his black frock-coat.

From those straight in front of him, and from the fugle-

man's immediate followers, he receives the profoundest attention, but the outsiders have already begun "all the fun of the fair," and the guilds and trades want to be home again, and out of these festive dresses as soon as possible. Actuated by this sentiment, one body of processionists,—I rather fancy it's the bold outlaw, *Robin Hood*, and party, still painfully anxious as to the durability of their pink fleshings,—sets the example, and their band strikes up a noble march just as the Member of Parliament is making one of his best points. This disconcerts him only for a second or two, but the exodus has commenced, and, as no set of processionists can move off except accompanied by their band, the harmony of the proceedings is somewhat interfered with.

The oration goes on, interesting to those who, being close at hand and so jammed up that they can't get away, have nothing left for it but to cheer loudly at every point which they think is likely to be the finish of the speech, while those not personally known to the excellent Member, or who are not directly under his eye, are looking about to discover the shortest, easiest, and quietest way of escape, comforting themselves for what they may lose, by remembering that they'll see it all in the papers to-morrow.

So we return to the hotel and fetch the trap.

Only just in time, for already the whiskey has begun to tell on a great number of those, who, in drinking to Burns's memory, have considerably impaired their own.

Tam o' Shanter and *Souter Johnie* I see before me,—two genuine successors of *Tam* and *Johnie*, with more than a wee drappie in their ee—"fou," helplessly "foe," but insisting on driving themselves home in a gig, but which, to begin with, they can't even climb.

The landlord and his ostlers are equal to the occasion, and on their third attempt to mount, which ends in their both sprawling in the yard, they carry them off, swearing, protesting, kicking, and struggling to fight everybody, and finally lock them up in an empty old two-stalled stable, where they can lie like pigs, as they are, in the dirty straw, till they recover their senses, murmuring to themselves, "A mon's a mon for a' that."

The festivities will be kept up, I am informed, until a late hour in honour of the Rantin' Roarin' Rovin' Boy, Robin Burns. One of these celebrations is enough. "Never again wi' you, Robin."

Back to Allison's and thus ends not a Nicht wi' Burns, but a Day wi' him. And, in the words of the modern songster, "What a day we've been having."



CHAPTER V.

GROUSE—SUMMARY—CONSOLATION — PREFERENCE — DRIVING—RULE
 — EXCEPTIONS — ZULU — A POINT — BOGS — BIRDS—AIM —
 THOUGHTS—SIGHS—DOGS—BOGS—LAUGH—SADNESS— SHOOTING
 —HITTING—DIARY—TENNIS—OUT OF IT—ARRIVAL.



AUGUST 12th.
 Bravo, grouse!
 A day wi' Moor after
 a nicht wi' Burns.
 The Lowlands.

Lovely weather,
 Tiring heather.
 Good strong leather
 For the nether Man ;
 Pointing dogs,
 Sticky bogs,
 Fire at grouse,
 Go in soue,
 Get out how I can.

*Summary of Morn-
 ing's Performance.—*

Walked for the first
 hour and saw no birds. Next two hours the birds saw me. Luncheon.
 Pigeon and steak pie : the "Consolation Steaks." End of Act I.

After luncheon. Walking, hopping over, and into, the boggy
 peat, and re-peating the process, on the bonnie—I should say
 boggie Scotch moor, is fatiguing. A prospect of three hours'
 more Hop-Scotch is not encouraging.

[*Happy Thought.*—Ayr and exercise.]

The birds have a knack of getting up just when a bird is the
 very last thing I'm thinking about.

I fancy I should prefer "driving," when I am informed that you
 are put into a pit—like Joseph by his brethren, only that wasn't
 on a grouse moor—and the birds are driven towards you. To

enjoy this entertainment I fancy I should prefer a seat in the *pit*, to remaining in the *bogses*. You sit, quietly and happily, for half-an-hour or so, then, as you see them flying towards you (so it was vividly described to me), you go “bang, bang!” and down they come.

All this I feel is an exact description of what I should do, were I in the pit, from the very commencement of “sitting quietly and smoking a pipe for half-an-hour;” in fact, I follow it with all a sportsman’s keenness up to the “bang, bang!”—the go-bang—in which, as far as letting off the gun goes, I yield to no man living—but at this point the description ceases to apply to me. The *dénouement* of “down they come!” is not my climax. When I “let off” the gun, I generally “let off” the birds at the same time. I say *generally*, because there is no rule without one, or two, brilliant exceptions. The grouse may think they are safe with me, but they are not. I am not to be depended upon. I may kill them when they least expect it. I have sometimes wept over the untimely fate of confiding rabbits innocently sitting up in a field, and, often, absolutely staring me full in the face, up to within a second of their decease. They didn’t think I was in earnest, poor things! But I was; and I’ve eaten them afterwards—in pies. Perhaps they thought I’d only got a hare-trigger, and wasn’t going in for rabbits. But when I’ve once tasted blood, so to speak, I could shoot anything—even a landlord from behind a hedge, I believe, just for practice, and about quarter-day. Yes, when I’ve once begun, all the latent savagery of my nature comes out. Also, when I’ve *not* tasted blood again, so to speak, and meaning when I’ve missed every blessed shot, I feel as wild as the birds are, and am ready for anything. I am vindictive; I rage against the birds; I could put torpedoes in peat bogs, and make a bag of some thousands in a minute. Are these the peaceful sentiments of a Christian? Yes—when he’s given himself up to the Moors.

[*Happy Thought*.—Anyhow “driving” must be better than walking.]

Pointer points. Keeper makes mysterious signs to me, as if he had caught sight of a Zulu, or other black game, in a bush.

I am still stealing towards the mysterious spot, and am arranging in my own mind exactly what I shall do should a covey suddenly get up, when, before I have quite settled my plans, there is a chuckle, a flapping of wings, and away flies a bird. Bang!—with one barrel, and away he still flies.

And as he flies
The keeper sighs.

Wonder, to myself, why I didn't fire the other barrel immediately. The other barrel doesn't seem to come so readily. If this is so, next time I will begin with the other barrel. If my mind had only been *quite* made up before that grouse appeared, he would never have left this moor alive. But as it is—

The Grouse that flies
And gets away,
Surely dies
Another day.

I feel that if I were to meet that bird again, it would be the worse for him.

I tramp o'er the moors, breathing slaughter against the grouse. It is a long time before I see another. I fancy they are hiding, and looking at me as I pass.

A young dog is told off to us. He is a gay young dog, and fond of practical joking. All his points are sly jokes, as there is never anything to be seen. He is chastised for playing the fool, and dismissed to the care of a boy, who brings us such an old hand at the game that he scores two points straight off. I bang both barrels, as a sort of *feu de joie*, and the birds go off exultingly. The Keeper sighs again heavily. I fancy I hear a smothered laugh in the direction of the boy with the comic dog. The boy looks serious enough. Perhaps it is an illustration of "The little dog laughed to see such sport!" On we tramp again.

Interminable bogs! To paraphrase what a trespassing Scotchman said when he was asked where he was going to—"Bock again!" so it is with me—"Bog again!" I'm again up to my knees or knickerboggers.

When asked, subsequently, if I've had good shooting, with the strictest regard for truth I can reply, "Yes, first-rate *shooting*"—

with an emphasis on the "shooting;" but as to the *hitting*—that were to inquire too curiously.

Chuckle, chuckle, flap-flap, from a bird. The Keeper, who has given me up as hopeless, takes no notice of either the bird or me, except to sigh to himself and to plod on. But my blood is up. This time he shall not escape me. Bang! Missed! Bang! Winged him! "I've done the deed! Did you not hear a noise?" Rather.

Now, more birds—quick! The cry is still, they don't come. But I have finished with a grand blaze of triumph, and the Keeper who had been with me, and whom my splendid failures have plunged into the deepest melancholy, is radiant once again. "Sigh no more, Keeper!"

End of Second Act. Milk and whiskey. End of *The Gamester*. Return of Shooter Johnnie.

It suddenly occurs to me that no one has pointed out to me all day either Ben Lomond, Burns's Monument, or the Isle of Arran in the distance. A most remarkable day.

In the paper next day I see with pride, in the accounts from the moors, "*Mr. Allison of Dumdoddie and party bagged eighty brace, three plovers, and four hares.*" It is gratifying to know that I was one of the "party." Also gratifying that details are not given. In fact it would be invidious.

* * * * *

We spend our evenings in reading Burns's Poems and toasting Burns's memory. I don't wonder at Burns's memory being kept so warm in Scotland, as it's so frequently being toasted.

Then, later on, with the whiskey we become philosophical, and discuss Mallock's *Is Life worth Living?* A Nicht wi' Mallock, Huxley, Tyndall, and George Eliot, who, with *Ophelia*, might ask—

"What means this, my Lord?"

Whereupon I should reply—

"Marry, this is miching Mallock—O!" Which sounds very like what Burns himself would have said—"It means mischief."

Night-Light Thoughts on Lawn-Tennis.—A perfect specimen of Lawn-tennis would be "A Love game, and no Deuce." Scoring at

Lawn-tennis contains the headings of Chapters in a Romantic History :—Chapter I. Fifteen, Love.—Chapter II. Thirty, Love.—Chapter III. Forty, Love.—Chapter IV. Forty, Fifteen (Love's out of it).—Chapter V. Forty, Thirty (Better Match).—Chapter VI. Forty all ! Deuce !—Chapter VII. Coquetting. 'Vantage to one, 'Vantage to t'other. The Deuce, like the Queen's Proctor intervening.—Chapter VIII. Triumph. — Chapter IX. A Love Match. Retirement.

No more strawberries and cream. As *Rip Van Winkle* used to say, "I've sworn off." Feel lighter-hearted in consequence.

Charming place. Weather unsettled. We all hope it will make up its mind to "fine."

Lovely afternoon. Three courts ready. Visitors arriving. On reaching the lawn, I hear an energetic lady arguing with her opponent, across the net, as to the state of the score.

"I'm forty !" she announces, at the top of her voice.

Her opponent, who is waiting for her service, replies, "Yes, forty, and one fault !"

She admits the one fault cheerfully.

There's a moral. "Forty, and only one fault !"

Well, well,—in vain is the net set in the sight of the tennis-player !

[*Happy Thought (here).*—Excellent Scotch name for a Tennis Professor—the McRacket.]

They are making up their sets. Our hostess is, as it were, casting the parts for thrée comediettas of four *dramatis personæ* each.

Becoming wary by experience, and aspiring to improve, I prefer playing in company with my fellow-men. As, out of politeness to the fair guests (of various ages), I cannot utter this sentiment aloud, I adopt much the same plan of tactics as one does in a ball-room when the smiling hostess attempts to surprise you into dancing with some neglected faded fair one, for whom she has charitably undertaken to find partners.

The formula then is, "Thank you so much, but I've been dancing everything, and I really must," &c.; or, plainly and defiantly, "Thanks, but I'm engaged—just waiting for my partner

to return ;” or, “Thanks, but I don’t dance a galop, or a waltz,” &c., or any other excuse ready at the moment. Or one retires into a remote corner of a conservatory, followed by the hostess with her *protégé*, or down to the refreshment-room, or, in fact, “anywhere, everywhere, out of the world !”

I see a gallant set (male) in flannels and colours. I should like to make one of their party. They were enthusiastic till I came up diffidently. The hostess suggests my joining *them*. They pretend to be in doubt as to whether Maclaren isn’t coming. The hostess says I can play till he comes. There is no avidity on the part of the flannels and colours to close with this proposition.

It suddenly occurs to me that *I* am in the position of the “Neglected Faded Flower” for whom the hostess is so charitably anxious to obtain a partner. I say, apologetically, “Perhaps you’ve made up your set ?” They reply, awkwardly, “that they have, but ——” Then they regard one another in a furtive way, and appear considerably embarrassed. Maclaren comes to their relief, and they hail him with such a shout of joy as might come from a crew on a shoal at the sight of the lifeboat. I fancy I detect a wink passing round among themselves as they retire to their ground.

In the meantime the other sets have been made up, and, for the nonce, I am out in the cold.

At this moment a trap is driven up carrying two young ladies and a small boy.

He is in that neatest of all boys’ suits, an Eton suit ; so white about the collar, and so trim about the legs, so generally natty and tidy, and, when topped up, on a Sunday, with a glossy hat, so thoroughly “gentlemanly”—the type of an English Home Institution. The boy, I feel instinctively, is an Etonian. I shall interview him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ETONIAN—MODERN BOY—INTERVIEW—CONTRAST—TEMPORIS ACTI—
—STYLE—OLD—NEW—QUESTION—ANSWER—LONG AGO—DEAD
WATER—MORE TENNIS—SOMETHING NEW—A MATCH—FAGGED—
A BOY AGAIN—GALLERY—CHAFF—RETIREMENT—'VANTAGE—
RESOLUTION.



HAVING been at Eton myself, I am enabled to ask him certain questions with an air of an old hand. Not having talked to modern young Etonians for some time, I am a little at a loss what to say to him.

My host says to me, "Here's Teddy Mackenzie—he's at Eton. You" (to me) "were at Eton, weren't you?"

I say "Yes," and look at the small boy, who smiles incredulously. His smile implies "Gammon! *You*" (meaning *me*) "weren't at Eton."

I see that the boy's manner is not without its effect on my host. He begins to believe I wasn't at Eton. In another second, if this small boy goes on smiling incredulously, he'll begin to believe I'm a humbug—a MacHumbug—altogether.

Must put Etonian questions to Eton Boy, and show I have been there.

I say, at haphazard, with a vague memory of the form the question ought to assume, "Where are you at?"

On thinking it over subsequently, I discover that what was in my mind was, "Where do you *keep*? —a Cambridge Undergraduate

expression for "Where do you lodge?" confused with "Whose house are you in?"

"Where am I *at*?" repeats the little Etonian, carelessly cutting at an imaginary ball with his racket. "What do you mean?—I'm at Eton." And again he smiles, more incredulously and superciliously than before, and makes another careless cut at an invisible ball.

Now, did I reply in this manner when *I* was a little Etonian? Wasn't *I* far more respectful to my elders? I'm afraid there's a falling off in this respect—literally in this "*respect*."

"I know you're at Eton," I reply, blandly, while my host watches us as though it were a fine contest of intellects between me and the little boy, in which the odds were greatly in favour of the latter. "But at what house?"

"Oh!" he says, explaining to me what I do mean, and looking up at me from under his wide-brimmed hat. "You mean who's my tutor?"

Yes!—I *did* mean that. The memory of my boyhood's days comes back again in a flash! Yes, I did mean "Who's your tutor?"

"Toby Bunford's my tutor," he says.

What? is it possible! Bunford—without the Toby—was *my* tutor, and we used to call him Punch Bunford. Evidently, they call this Bunford Toby because he comes after Punch; Toby being supposed to follow his master. Good. I give the young Etonian my information about Punch, and my theory about Toby. It has no effect upon his manner, however. He still preserves his smile of supercilious incredulity, and my host, I firmly believe, thinks I am inventing my experience, but listens with as impartial an air as he can assume. The contest of intellects is still going on, only it has assumed the appearance of a serious counsel being suddenly examined by a flippant witness, before a judge who is rather pleased at the turn things are taking.

The boy looks at me as though he didn't believe for one moment that Punch Bunford had ever been a tutor, and says curtly,

"Punch Bunford's a Fellow."

Indeed! Oh, then, I suppose they make Fellows of superannuated tutors. Then the Fellows in my day had been tutors in somebody

else's day. I never knew this before. Would it have made any difference in my conduct in years gone by had I known it? I don't think so.

[*Happy Thought*.—Every tutor has his day. Like a saint,—and a dog. Toby is now having *his* day, Toby Bunford, I mean. And *his* day is a “day out” in the vacation. Poor Toby!]

I turn to my host and explain to him that, in my time, Punch Bunford was my tutor, whereat he doesn't appear the least bit interested. I feel convinced that if he talks me over with this small Etonian, alone, he will come to the conclusion that I never was at Eton at all, and am an impostor, a sort of Claimant. I am determined to prove that I was at Eton, and to compel the Etonian's respect—not for my age, but for my honesty. I wish him to recognise me as a boy and a brother. I should be happier if he would shake hands with me heartily, and tell me all about everything, of how the old place has changed, and how it remains the same, and how they do much the same *now* as I did *then*, and in fact, clearly prove to me that I only left Eton the day before yesterday, that I am only this little boy's senior by a fortnight or so at most, and that when the holidays are over, I shall go back again, and we shall both meet in the school yard and talk about “knowing him at home.” But no—he is a determined boy. He only smiles incredulously, and remains peculiarly uncommunicative.

My host is still waiting, judicially, to hear the issue of the examination. It almost seems that I had been invited here on the strength of my having been an Etonian, and that if, from this boy's evidence, it is shown that I have *not* been at Eton, my things will be packed up on the spot, and I shall be politely requested to leave, as having obtained an introduction here under false pretences.

I can't think of old Etonian terms which could effectually confirm my position.

Suddenly the expressions “wet bob,” “dry bob,” occur to me. I feel my face lighting up with the radiant smile of victory. I can never forget that “wet bob” means a boy who goes in for boating, and “dry bob” one who goes in for cricket.

"Are you a wet bob or a dry bob?" I ask, with an air that implies, "Now, then, my lad, am I not a Boy and a Brother?"

"I've got a lock-up," he replies.

Deuce take him! What's a "lock-up?" I ought to know. Let me see! Oh, I remember! A "lock-up" was a boat to oneself, and "a chance boat" meant one's paying so much and taking one's chance of whatever happened to be in. Good! Now I'll show him I know all about it.

"Ah!" I say, with a smack of satisfaction, recalling happy memories of idle times, "I suppose you get your sherry cobbler and pipe, and go up Dead Water. Eh?"

I rather emphasise the "pipe," implying that *I* know what these young dogs do, and that they can't get over *me*.

He stares at me. What *do* I mean?

My host stares at me, too. "That's a nice way of being at Eton," he remarks, with a dry, caustic laugh.

"Dead Water!" repeats the boy, shaking his head sharply, and nearly laughing outright. "Where's *that*?"

"Oh," I say, "come, hang it—not know Dead Water? Why, when I was there——" Ah, but it suddenly occurs to me that this was longer ago than the day before yesterday; and as the Young Etonian, all of the Modern Time, has never heard of "Dead Water"—which was an aquatic lounge in *my* day—the water which was dead *then*, must have been buried, long since, in a watery grave. He could tell me more about the Dead Sea, I dare say, if I were to ask him; but I shan't.

The Etonian goes on to tell me that he occupies himself chiefly in volunteering, shooting, and drilling. This is all new to me.

"Volunteering and shooting!" Dear me!

"And," I ask, "is old Webber still there?"

I prefix "Old" to the name of Webber (who was a confectioner) because it occurs to me that if Punch Bunford is a superannuated tutor, Webber must be a superannuated pastry-cook.

The Etonian shakes his head, and smiles suspiciously. Am I chaffing him? He doesn't know any "Webber."

"He had a shop on——" (here my memory fails me)—"on—— Dear, bless me, what's the name of the bridge?"

"Windsor Bridge?" suggests the boy, maliciously.

"No, no—just out of bounds," I say, with a side-look at my host, to see if he is not favourably impressed by my knowledge of localities. He isn't, that's evident. It is, apparently, to him, still a contest of wits between myself and the Etonian, with six to four in the latter's favour.

"Barnes Bridge," says the boy.

"Yes!" I exclaim, exultingly—"on Barnes Bridge, and Barnes, too, and the Pool!"

And I nearly shout with joy at remembering so much.

The little Etonian only shakes his head pityingly. All gone—except the bridge.

I question him about the position of certain houses. No. He doesn't know them. He has never even heard of them. "Joe's?" Pooh! Who's Joe? "Brian? Spankie?" The Etonian smiles upon me sadly. I feel that were he to put his thoughts into words, he would say, "Poor old chap! What *is* he maundering about?"

I am inclined to ask if Eton exists at all, as *I* knew it?

My host tires of the conversation—perhaps of me. I remark to him, for the sake of my character for veracity, "The place must have changed considerably."

He nods.

The boy, cutting at the hundredth invisible ball with a racket, and smiling, knowingly, up at me, from under his broad brim, observes,

"I s'pose you haven't been there for a *very long time*?"

It occurs to me, as something that had never struck me before, that I have *not* been there for a *very long time*. I begin to call to mind when I left, and when I went,—dates for the boy's information, and my own.

My host suggests that Teddy, the Etonian, should play a game of lawn-tennis with me; whereat the boy seems to measure me from head to foot (not a very lengthy calculation, though I would not hear my enemy say so), and his smile becomes more supercilious and more decided than ever.

"Do you play lawn-tennis at Eton?" I ask diffidently, and am almost inclined to add "Sir," and raise my hat to him, respectfully.

"A little—not much," he answers, carelessly, switching the racket about.

"I suppose," I say to him, still diffidently, and with a trembling sort of fear that he will by some sort of right, fag me to fetch the balls, or order me to run and get something for him that he has left in the house, "I suppose you are a great swell at tennis?"

I put this to him in a flattering tone, so as to conciliate him, and induce him not to be severe, or unkind, with *me*.

"No," he says, "not much of a swell," and he begins driving the balls into the corner of the court where he is going to play.

By this time the other players in the other court—first-raters—are taking a rest, and have formed a gallery on the terrace.

I am in full lawn-tennis flannel costume, evidently intending to work hard. My antagonist, the little Etonian, doesn't even condescend to remove his coat, but saunters into the right-hand corner, and in another second, without saying "Play!" he has whizzed a ball right over the net, I have missed it, and he has taken the other side ready for next service.

The balls come whizzing over the net one after the other. He keeps me running from side to side without hitting one once, and in less than a minute the game is over.

Roars of laughter (at *me*), and ironical applause from the gallery.

I have to serve. Ripples of laughter from gallery, and facetious remarks on the match, all the worse for not being spoken out loud, but whispered half audibly.

I serve. Fault. *Mea culpa!*

I serve again; and again. *Mea culpa!* Ironical cheers. Somebody shouts out something to me. I smile, and say "What?"

Boy cries out, "Now then—that's *your* court!" and points to me to change sides. I had forgotten. I bow to him humbly, and wish I had never been at Eton.

Serve again. Good. He returns a whizzler. I make for it. Hit it. Where it goes I can't see. Nor anybody else. I have sent it flying over the tops of the trees. Ironical applause.

"Don't use so much force!" shouts my host, anxiously, who foresees the loss of the balls.

"All right!" I reply, as cheerfully as I can.

"The *other* side!" cries out the boy, in a tone that implies, "Now then, stoopid!" and again I bow mentally in the deepest humility, and feel that I am getting fagged just as much as though I were a boy again waiting to pick up the ball behind the five-courts in the school-yard. Do they exist still? I don't know. I don't care. I won't ask any more about Eton. It is no longer "the old place"—but quite a new one. And the boys are all new too. I'm sure *we* were more respectful.

Another serve. Fault. Applause. Hang the fault!

Another serve for the right. Returned into the centre. It comes slowly. I see it coming. I know exactly the place where it must bound. I slip forward, make my hit *at* it, but the ball passes on underneath.

Applause from gallery.

The Etonian calls out, "There's a hole in your racket."

I examine my bat. Roars of laughter, specially from boy. As I am examining it, and see no hole, it suddenly occurs to me that this is his chaff. I am perfectly sure *I* was more respectful to my elders—for I now admit I am his elder—when I was a boy at Eton. *On a changé tout cela.*

[*Happy Thought.*—To continue my inspection of bat as if this was part of *my* chaff. Everybody, however, I am sure, sees through this very shallow performance.]

More games. After the third I fall back, so to speak, on my weight of years and gravity of character, and protest I don't see the fun of running about—not, of course, that I *can't*, but simply that I don't care about doing it.

Boy becomes careless, as despising his foe. He wins all the games in something less than a quarter of an hour. I've only scored twice, when he was VERY careless.

I say to him, patronisingly, "Why, you're a capital player!"

He has become rather grumpy—I think he has been bored—by being sent to play with me, as if I were so many years younger, and no companion for him. At all events, he replies, candidly,

"You don't practise much, do you?"

I admit that I do *not* "practise" much, by way of answering

his question, which implies that I “don’t practise much, and can’t play at all.”

“Now, then,” cries my host, apparently in exuberant spirits at the conclusion of my performance, “we’ll have a real good match!” And forthwith, while I retire into the shade, the Etonian is mixed up in a set of four, is obliged to take off his coat, and, to my great delight, is tackled by his elder sisters, who work him hard and chaff him mercilessly: he then finds himself pitted against an elderly, but cool, and agile gentleman, an expert at the game, who, on every occasion (having no fear of Eton before his eyes), treats him as though he were a mere child, and I, as one of the gallery, following the fortunes of the game, come out of my shell, applaud ironically, make facetious remarks, call out “Butter-fingers!” when the Little Etonian misses the ball, and congratulate myself generally on taking the change out of him.

[*Happy Thought (as one of the spectators).*—“’Vantage to me.” I confess I am rather afraid of a reprisal; but he hasn’t time for it, as he is taken away by his family, who have to return to dinner after this exciting contest is finished.

Happy Thought.—Shall run down to Eton and stay a few days at the Christopher—is there a Christopher?—do they “keep up the Christopher?”—just to see what the place is like. I will. Yet—won’t it be melancholy? Shall I not be returning to my former haunts, like a Spirit from The Shades? I shall have no one to talk to; and if I address one of the boys, he will run away as though he had seen a ghost. I might get another ghost to accompany me. I’ll try.]

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END—CHANGES—WEATHER-GLASS—RECON-
NOITRING — CAUTION — DEW — DISCUSSION — PROPHETICAL —
WEATHERCOCK—WIRE—NEWS—SUMMING UP — CALLOUSNESS—
FAMILIARITY — PERFECTION — POLITENESS—WORKING ORDER —
PRESENT STATE — PROSPECT—NEPHEW—KEEPING ALIVE — ON
WIRES—ARRIVAL.



TIS the last strawberry, of summer, all his blooming companions have faded and gone. Nobody attempts to show me Ben Lomond, or to point out Burn's Monument in the distance. We look at the Isle of Arran when it is visible, and we look *for* it when it is invisible, silently. All that can be said about them has been said. We have exhausted

the subject. Even the weather, as a topic of conversation, is dismissed cursorily.

A few weeks ago, everybody coming down fresh in the morning—"fresh" in the morning sounds dissipated, but is meant healthily—used to tap the glass, screw the ivory button, tap it again, scrutinise it closely as if trying to detect a falsehood on the very face of it, shake his head despondently, or hopefully, or triumphantly, as the case might be, and then yield his place to the next comer, who would take his

turn at the glass with that eager, earnest expression that is seldom seen on a man's face, except when he is looking at the dim reflection of himself in a London shop-window, to see if he has got a black on his nose, or not. Then the two barometer-inspectors would go outside, not venturing further than the door-step, cautiously, as if fearful of being taken by surprise and captured, and not stirring until they have reconnoitred the carriage-road, left and right, as though on the look-out for the sudden appearance of an unfriendly Zulu out of the bushes.

There being no signs of danger, the visitors would step on to the gravel, and some, braver than the others, would just touch the lawn with the tips of their toes, drawing back quickly, as if they'd been stung by something, and then examining their soles to see what was the matter. This would lead to discussion.

Was the moisture the dew, or had there been a heavy fall of rain in the night? This having been *dem-ly* settled, one way or the other, everyone would then take up different positions for making meteorological observations. More discussion. Prophecies. Doubts, fears, hopes. Suddenly it strikes some one, that a really valuable opinion might be obtained from the Weathercock, just as it would naturally occur to anyone in a legal difficulty to consult a Solicitor.

The Weathercock, being consulted, differs slightly from that other eminent authority, the Barometer, and, apparently, from two other distinguished weathercocks in the immediate neighbourhood. Who shall decide when weathercocks disagree?

Happy Thought.—Wire to Forecast Department in London, and ask Clerk of the Weather what sort of a day we're going to have here in Scotland. Answer paid.

More conversation on the subject. Then a council would be held, in the carriage-drive, with a view to reconcile these apparent discrepancies. The most experienced in weather predictions talks of what would be infallible signs in any other part of the world with which he is personally acquainted, but admits that *here* he is at fault—this being his first visit. One or two bold thinkers pronounce for fine weather, and are regarded with a sort of veneration by the more timid; while the hopeful, but cautious minds, refer to

the sunset of last night as a prognostication of what the weather ought to be to-day. The elders shake their heads dubiously, as old birds who are not to be caught with chaff, and who, appearances being proverbially deceptive, are not going out without their umbrellas—catch them ! Then the host, inclining to the last and more cautious opinion, would give the others a ray of hope in pointing out how lazy was the view of Benjamin Lomond and Burns's Monument, "which," he would add, "is a good sign."

This summing-up used to be, mysteriously enough, the signal for the gong to sound, which meant "All in, to begin!"—breakfast.

But now this overture of the day, ending with the gong solo, seldom takes place, or, if at all, on a very limited scale.

We nod at the glass indifferently, as much as to say, "Still there, you old bore-ometer !" We just go to the front-door, give a sharp look out, shrug our shoulders, say nothing, and, the gong having sounded long ago perhaps, without any of us having remarked it, we enter the breakfast-room, nod to the nearest person, in much the same style as we had previously nodded to the barometer, if we haven't seen him before, and then occupy ourselves in a very business-like way.

When we first met together in this pleasantest of Country Houses, it was a perfect school of politeness for anyone to come into suddenly. It was a real pleasure to see, and to assist in. No one could do too much for anyone.

The Gentlemen were eagerly watching the Ladies, to anticipate their slightest wishes in the way of eggs, toast, ham, chicken, kижaree, marmalade, strawberries, and so forth, while the Ladies showed their appreciation of this devotion, by presiding in a really masterly manner at the tea urn, coffee- and cocoa-pots, never allowing hot milk to do duty for cold, keeping the tea fresh and fresh, in fact, hotter and hotter, so that the last cup of any of the breakfast beverages was equal to the first in strength, tone, taste, temperature, and every other perfection.

Then, after a few days, we improved. The politeness was in no way diminished : on the contrary, it was at high pressure, and in full working order. All went easily, without effort. Gentlemen knew which Ladies took ham, which eggs, and which eggs and ham, how many were for chicken, how many were for braised pie,

and could tell to a second when each would be ready for a clean plate and a fresh help. The waiting of the Gentlemen was so perfect, that the Ladies never had to wait at all.

On the other hand, the Ladies knew to a man who took coffee, who tea, and who cocoa, who took hot milk, who cold, who liked much sugar, who liked little, and who took none, and everyone was helped exactly to his taste and liking—always, of course, with the exception of that one undecided person, who *will* turn up on every occasion of this sort, and who never *can* make up his mind as to what he really does want, so upsetting all calculations, and generally finishing by saying, “Oh, don’t mind me—I’ll help myself;” and ultimately taking something of everything.

After a while, getting to know one another thoroughly well, unpunctuality set in. The men had gradually sat up later and later, and therefore rose later and later. They dropped into breakfast with various apologies, the younger offering excuses for their tardy appearance, and the more experienced not attempting to explain anything. Then, imperceptibly, there was a falling-off in politeness, generally, though sustained only in private and particular instances; the tone became familiar and less courteous. We had, as it were, begun with the *minuet de la cour*, and were ending with a polka. Perhaps the strain had been too great at first, and “self” was reasserting itself. At last our house party has dwindled down to a few, who cling on affectionately, like the bluebottles in September, and we are dependent for excitement on outsiders, to whose houses we go, and who return our visits.

My excellent host and myself agree that this is what we like. We have plenty of time for the papers, which are no longer seized on, taken away, and hidden, and after dinner we can sit down quietly to discuss claret, Burns’s works and life, and with the second bottle we discuss philosophy and social science. If my host insists on producing some peculiarly fine old port, after the claret, then we get into theology. On the whole, with the assistance of a little occasional contradiction from externs, the evenings are passed seriously, pleasantly, and profitably. After any prolonged discussion, finishing only with the departure of the last guest, whose carriage has been announced two hours ago, I

invariable retire to read up a certain portion of what are, to my mind, clenching anti-positivist arguments in Mr. Mallock's *Is Life worth Living!*

Having commenced a chapter, I find that this must be the same chapter I began last night, and when I've got to the second page, which determines me on the point, I close my eyes, to make a mental *resumé* of the strong points in the previous argument. The *resumé* becoming rather muddled, gets itself mixed up with lawn-tennis, with what we'll do to-morrow, with an indistinct recollection of having said something to somebody in London about something of great importance, which suddenly connects itself with something else that happened years and years ago, that I had forgotten till now,—and then—I pull myself together, and determine to . . . to put out the candle before I forget it.

Thus we are passing a pleasant and peaceable time, when one morning my host enters with a telegram, and announces to us generally, that "Jim's coming!"

The prospect of Jim's coming puts everyone into good spirits. A flash of delight passes round like an electric current. I own to feeling intensely pleased. Not because I know Jim, or have the slightest idea who he is, or what he is—"What's Allison to Jim, or Jim to Allison?" (*Mac Shakspeare* adapted)—but simply from seeing the delight depicted on everyone's countenance. Jim, it turns out, is Allison's nephew, the life and soul of the house—when he's there.

Host and hostess beam, as the former flourishes Jim's telegram, for it is a peculiarity with Jim, that, no matter where he may be, no matter how far from home, or how near—whether in India, Africa, Paris, Germany, London, or merely in the next village, if there is only a telegraph station to be found, Jim telegraphs.

Allison's house is six miles from a telegraph station, but this makes no difference to Jim, who, in the impulse of a message, annihilates time, space, and expense—the latter having nothing to do with his own pocket personally. So a messenger has arrived in hot haste on horseback, from the nearest town; and as there is a request that an answer may be sent, Allison complies with it, and sends one—it being comparatively economical to pay a shilling for sending a message, in order to forestall another five-shilling tele-

gram from Jim in the course of the morning, inquiring if the first had come all right.

Everyone personally acquainted with Jim beams again.

"He'll wake us up a bit!" says Allison; which, though he means it well, is rather a slur on the present company's liveliness. We all express intense delight at the prospect of being woke up, and privately to one another—those who don't know Joseph, I mean Jim—wonder how the operation is going to be performed.

"He'll keep us alive!" repeats Uncle Allison, beaming again. And once more the guests express themselves with extreme politeness on the subject of being kept alive, but secretly resent the liberty that Nephew Jim is going to take with their existence. It really sounds as if we were a set of old dummies, whose machinery having gone wrong, was going to be set in motion by a touch-up from Nephew Jim, and we are as much disturbed as would be a party of over-fed lotos-eaters by the emptying out on them a tankful of electric eels.

Jim has already given us his first shock with his telegram. We are undoubtedly more alive than we were an hour ago for example.

And, as I have said, everyone is beaming. The servants all beam, specially the Butler, who beams almost to bursting, so intense is the struggle going on within him between rapturous joy and proper decorum.

The day goes on. Like *Mariana*, we become a-weary of waiting, and anxious. The beams are hidden by clouds. The Butler is shrinking again to his natural size. Suddenly they all beam again. Another telegram!! Another five shillings! Uncle Allison beams less this time than at first; but the Butler is again inflated with joy, and beams more than ever. But for a strong command over himself, which enables him to "keep himself down," he would swell up, rise in the air, and only descend after a sharp contact with the ceiling.

Uncle Allison I rather think I hear mutter,

"Confound the fellow! Why the doose does he go on telegraphing?"

We are all anxious to know the contents. What does he say? Is he coming? Nothing wrong? Let us know the worst or the best.

"Missed train, catch next. Wire to Carlisle, say if carriage meets. If not, will wire on for fly."

That's what he has to say. We breathe again. Butler, who, for one second, has been in danger of collapsing suddenly, beams again. All beaming. We're all beaming, beam, beam, beaming, we're all beaming at our house at home—except Allison, who must send another telegram to catch Jim at Carlisle *en route*; for, if not, Jim will order a fly to meet him, and that will be another useless expense.

There is still a sort of uncertainty as to how or when he may arrive. Were he an ordinary person he couldn't be here for five hours at least. This, however, doesn't prevent the Butler from going to the door about every half-hour, to look out and see if he is coming.

No one who knows Jim would swear to feeling perfectly sure that he isn't on the premises at this present moment, hiding, and ready to bounce out on us.

Our host disposes of this idea, "as," he says, "if Jim were anywhere about, we should have heard him long ago."

When Nephew Jim *does* come, we do hear him with a vengeance.

Having finished our tennis, we are enjoying, after a bath, that deliciously refreshing semi-siesta, when one dawdles over dressing for dinner, and the edge of one's appetite becomes gradually keener and keener,—when, suddenly, a blast from a coach-horn startles me from a reverie over the waning state of my dress-boots. Coach-horn or bugle, or whatever it is, sounds again, and the next moment there is a shouting of directions, and a staggering on the staircase of heavily-laden people with boxes; then a dashing charge of one, up the stairs, three steps at a time; then a loud inquiry from the landing as to the dinner-hour, to which the reply, that it is at eight, is almost lost in a wild whoop, as an introduction to the following mysterious sentence, delivered in the cheeriest possible tone,

"All right! Hokee-pokee! Play up for the cocoa-nuts!"

When there is another bang of a door that shakes the house to its foundations, and, judging from the noise of chucking heavy weights about, the occupant of the room next to me is apparently

"playing up for the cocoa-nuts" in preference to dressing for dinner."

As I descend the stairs five minutes afterwards, I hear bursts of vocal melody within, snatches of popular airs whistled, and a dull wooden-sounding accompaniment, which may either be the clog-dance, or a violent struggle with a boot-jack.

I meet my host on the stairs.

"Jim's come!" he cries, gleefully.

I thought so. He has come—like a whirlwind—and the process of "keeping us all alive" has commenced.



CHAPTER XXVI.

KEEPING ALIVE — DESCRIPTION — DINNER — DISCUSSION—GLOOM—A
FLASH — SUGGESTIONS — ANNOYANCE — INTERRUPTION — JIM'S
OPINIONS — BETS — BUTLER — CHALLENGES — HALF-CROWNS —
REPLIES—SCORING—RABBITS—SAWBBATH—DEPARTURE—END OF
VISIT.



RULY, Nephew Jim does keep us alive. I had no idea how sedate we had become until his appearance on the scene.

He has a vocabulary and idioms of his own, which he has partly invented and partly compiled by a process of careful selection from burlesques, music-hall ditties, the Clown's catch-words in pantomimes, and sporting slang generally.

He is, undoubtedly, a fine young English gentleman all of the very modernest time, and we are miles away behind him in the foggy land.

He is full of snatches of various melodies, no one of which he ever gives in a complete form. He enlivens the house generally, with the most telling points of popular refrains, seldom going up or down stairs without a chorus, begun, if ascending, with a shout at the foot of the staircase and ending with a bang of his door on the second landing; or, if descending, commencing with a bang and ending with a jump of three steps taken in a flying leap.

He is hearty and jovial, in the highest possible spirits, and

decidedly impatient of the serious, political, or philosophical conversation with which our sedate selves have hitherto beguiled the evenings.

At dinner the subject that occupies our attention is the present serious state of the country, agricultural distress, lowering of rents, difficulties between landlords and tenants.

There are three landed proprietors at table, including our host, and I am deeply interested in their views of the prospects of the United Kingdom.

"It is a serious matter," observes Sir Andrew McCorrie, a severe-looking elderly gentleman, with an inclination to lay down the law on every subject, "and there is but one thing to be done for the next year at least, and that is to reduce the rents all round."

Mr. Alexander, a younger man, and a lesser landlord, does not see this in the same light. He would suggest another course.

"There is *no* other course," says Sir Andrew, frowning at the idea of anyone's attempting to improve on his original suggestion.

Our host shakes his head dubiously.

"It will play the deuce with some of us," he observes, "and there'll be no going up to London for the Season,"—here our hostess becomes interested in the discussion—"and precious little to do in the country too, if the hunters are to be sold, and establishments reduced all round."

"Ah!" sighs our hostess sympathetically, as if for the first time a light was breaking in upon her as to the effects of the weather and the crops on the parks, ball-rooms, and opera-houses.

We are all silent and sad, moodily regarding our champagne as though it were the last glass at parting previous to our all being led off to the workhouse.

But Nephew Jim has not come down for his holidays—he has been reading with a Coach—to be gloomy, and at this point, being no respecter of persons, he dashes in brilliantly.

"I say, Uncle," he cries, "I'll tell you what you can do if you are all hard up."

We all listen, and Sir Andrew frowns more portentously than ever. The idea of his being included among the "hard up" ones!!

"Well," asks our host, "what?"

"Why, look here," continues Jim, "I've got a Bogardus trap—rifle, glass balls, and all complete. I'm a nailer at it. Bobby Roberts laid me two to one I wouldn't hit ten out of fifteen——"

"And did you?" asks his Aunt, pretending a sudden interest in the Bogardus trap, partly to shield him from the evident wrath of Sir Andrew at the irrelevancy of the interruption, and partly because she has some sort of latent faith in her Nephew's originality, though at present none of us clearly see how Jim's hitting ten out of fifteen glass balls, shot out of a Bogardus trap, can possibly benefit the struggling farmers or the unfortunate landlords.

"Yes," replies Jim, with a perfect shout of triumph that nearly sends Sir Andrew into a fit. "I hit fourteen out of fifteen, and pocketed his two quid. I scored off him there."

"I don't see what that has to do with what we were speaking about," remarks Sir Andrew, sententiously, and then adds, patronisingly, "which perhaps you are not yet old enough to understand."

But Jim is not going to be patronised, and not going to be put down.

"Yes, it has," he says; "Uncle and I will go round the country with the trap, take six to four everywhere. I'll shoot, and Uncle shall carry the balls——"

"Thank you," says our host, amused,—as we all are except Sir Andrew, who, evidently objecting to such ill-timed levity, would interrupt if he could; but Jim, having once started, won't let him, and goes on enthusiastically, as though he were organising the most brilliant scheme for the relief of the present distress.

"And," he continues, "we'd welsh 'em. I'd make a miss or two, just to put 'em off; then they'd double the odds. I'd do the trick. Uncle should collect the coin, and on we'd go again. You might come with us," he adds, as a kindly afterthought, to Sir Andrew.

Sir Andrew's breath is literally taken away, and he replies, severely,

"I don't shoot glass balls from—from——" He hasn't caught the name of the trap. Jim assists him to the word.

"From Bogardus traps, eh?" says Jim. "Oh, you'd soon do it with practice. If you came with me and Uncle, you might drive

the caravan or beat the drum. We'd diddle 'em! Here, Waiter—I mean Butler!"

The Butler is doubtful as to being addressed as Waiter, but gets over it quickly, and attends to Jim's request that he won't put quite so much froth into his champagne next time.

"I'll get the real stuff while I can," he explains affably to Mr. Alexander, "as we're all going to the workhouse."

It is all in vain, after this, that Sir Andrew attempts to state his views on home or foreign politics, on all of which subjects Jim expresses himself in his own peculiar style very freely, generally to the effect that "The Nigger"—meaning either the Ameer or Cete-wayo—"will diddle us if we don't bosh him." As a rule, he offers to back his opinions for a small sum. He is always betting half-a-crown that something is or isn't, or that somebody won't or will. It is only a form of expression, and never finds any takers.

The grouse is just the slightest bit full-flavoured. The guests are too polite to notice it. Not so Jim, who at once shouts out to our host,

"I say, Uncle."

"Well?"

"Game's a bit lofty, eh?"

Then to the servant—not the Butler this time—who had neglected Jim's instructions as to filling his glass.

"I say—here—you'll get yourself disliked, you will." And the man, audibly tittering, has to return and make up for the deficiency.

The conversation turns, at last, as it must do in Scotland, at least once during the evening, on Burns, and his merits as a song-writer are discussed.

"In his songs," says Sir Andrew, who has seized the opportunity presented to him by Jim's having his mouth full of hot tart, to monopolise the conversation, "Burns showed himself pre-eminently a genius. His songs are unequalled. I know nothing, that, for pathos, for true poetic fire, and for local colouring, can touch them. Where is the song-writer nowadays?"

Jim is equal to the occasion, and suddenly recovering from the effects of the over-hot fruit, he looks up and answers decidedly,

"Maedermott."

Sir Andrew elevates his eyebrows, and observes that he has never heard of the poet in question, whereupon Jim, resuming his currant and raspberry, says,

"He's first-rate. Writes 'em and sings 'em. You go next time you're in town. Canterbury or Oxford," he adds, with his mouth full.

"An Oxford man, did you say?" asks Sir Andrew.

Jim nearly explodes.

"No. Oxford Music-Hall man. Had you there! Right you are, says Moses. Whoa, Emma! But I say," he goes on, cutting short his list of ballads, and warming with his subject, as he finishes his tart, "have you heard Terry in *Don Caesar* and *Little Doctor Faust*? 'How does he do it?' 'The Continong—the Continong!'" and if it were not for the table, I am convinced that he would give us an imitation, with dance to follow, on the spot.

Burns, as a song-writer, is nowhere after this.

"I know a fellow who sings all the songs, and plays the banjo too, fine!" continues Jim, enthusiastically. "You ask him down if you're fond of music," he says, leaning across the table to Sir Andrew, who at that moment looks as if he could murder a song. "You come over and hear him sing, '*I've been photographed like this.*' You'll like him awfully." Then he adds, pleasantly winking aside to me, "Scored off him there!"

Jim is irrepressible. Sir Andrew is longing for an opportunity to take him down, or, as Jim would say, to "score him off." Sir Andrew assumes a patronising air of intense superiority. He tries to treat Jim as a mere boy. But it won't do. He catches Jim munching a juicy pear in a most schoolboyish fashion, and says condescendingly, hoping to turn the laugh against Jim with his mouth full,—“You seem to be well occupied.”

"All right up to now," is the instant rejoinder, and we laugh with Jim, much to Sir Andrew's discomfiture.

"You'd like another pear?" says Sir Andrew, addressing him as though he were a child of ten years old.

"Not this journey," replies Jim. "Full inside! All right!"

Henceforth he won't leave Sir Andrew alone, and we all feel that the latter has brought it on himself. Jim offers to shoot him at Bogardus balls for half-a-crown, to back himself to stand on his

head against Sir Andrew for the same amount; and, on similar terms, he wishes to challenge him to compete in various other feats, such as performing on the coach-horn, strokes at billiards, and playing the side-drum.

"I scored off him!" cries Jim, triumphantly, as Sir Andrew drives away; for Jim evidently takes as much delight in giving pride a fall, as did *Jeames*, when he slapped "Old Pompossaty" on the shoulder and addressed him as "Bareacres, old Buck!"

Nephew Jim in the daytime appears in brilliant flannels, and a planter's straw hat. As he is seldom without a rifle, or some murderous weapon in his hand, he has the air of an amateur backwoodsman. A faithful bulldog, of most unprepossessing appearance, waddles in a slouching sort of way at his heels, scaring everyone, but being really the most good-tempered gentle animal that ever winked at a cat and passed on.

When Nephew Jim is not singing snatches of his favourite melodies, he is either taking a light blow-out on the coach-horn—he says, "You see I'm reading with a Coach, so I ought to play the horn, else we shouldn't get on"—or practising bugle-calls, or, having military proclivities, he is inspiring himself with a *pas de charge* on the side-drum.

Sunday in Scotland is a dull day for everyone, but a very dull day for Jim, who becomes dreadfully depressed.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and consequently Sunday is a real holiday for the unfortunate rabbits, who have led a miserable sort of hunted-down, in-and-out-of-a-hole existence since Jim's arrival. The rabbits, for six days in the week, are perpetually playing a game of hide-and-seek with Jim and his gun, but on Sunday they appear with quite a festive air in the fields, sitting on the lawn, coming boldly up to the garden, and defying Jim, as it were, under his very nose.

Music being prohibited in Scotland on Sunday, Jim, fortunately imagining that his coach-horn, side-drum, and bugle come under this denomination, finds his occupation gone.

Uncle Allison appears in gorgeous apparel for the Kirk. Top hat, frock-coat, and all ready for Hyde Park in the Season. This is calculated to produce a fine moral effect on his Nephew, as from this special costume, combined with a suitable air of sobriety,

ROUND ABOUT MY GARDEN.

ROUND ABOUT MY GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

AT LITTLE SHRIMPTON—TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTS—BASKING—AUNT—
UNCLES—GRANDFATHER'S STORY—IN FUTURO—JACK AND GIL—
ANYBODY'S HEAD—CONSULTATION—SPHINX—ENTANGLEMENT—
SUGGESTIONS OF GARDENING—AND FARMING—THE JOHNSONARY
—THE GLYMPIHNS—DESIGNS.



VERY *Happy Thought*.—By the sea-side. At Little Shrimpton.

I note, also, that the First Volume of *Typical Developments* has nearly reached completion: all but putting it together, and writing the last three hundred and fifty pages, it is comparatively finished.

Happy Thought.—Finish it positively.

Popgood and Groolly, my publishers, are thinking about it. It

will certainly be a grand, philosophic, and generally comprehensive work. They want to know, by way of coming practically to business, "What it will make?"

Happy Thought.—To reply, genially, "A Hit." They mean, however, "How many pages will it make?" The question with *me* is, "How many pages do they *want* it to make?" Subject postponed until I've found this out. I decline to hurry it. They agree with me. Because a work like this requires application, concentration, and sustentation. Again they agree with me. In the meantime they have, they say—at least, their Managing Director says—that they have by them some novel illustrations for a Christmas book about *Cinderella*, and if I would like to undertake "writing up" to these, why, *Typical Developments*, Vol. I., might easily wait. Think it over at sea-side. Little Shrimpton with my Aunt and a couple of Uncles.

Complication in Family Matters.—Basking in the rays of a warm sun on a pebbly beach, under a clear blue sky, and fanned by a gentle breeze, which is neither east nor north—and that's all I, negatively, know about it—I lie, considering present circumstances. I am here, supposed to be, what my friend Englemore calls "picking myself up," and "pulling myself together."

Happy Thought.—Like a puzzle. *Mem.*—Note this for *Typical Developments*, Vol. I. (or somewhere, if not room for it here on account of Popgood and Groolly wanting it to make so many or so few pages), under heading, "P. for *Puzzle*; Man," &c., &c. There's a fine thought in this, rather hidden, but to be worked out. Do it later.

The process of pulling myself together and picking myself up, seems to consist, chiefly, in laying myself out, not to shine in Society, but away from Society, in the sun. After two weeks of this method I am partly pulled together, and slightly picked up.

Without a family, I am a family man. Inexact quotation which occurs to me, "Some achieve families, and some have families thrust upon them." Mine is the latter case. My Aunt came to look after me, and my two Uncles were bequeathed to *my* care.

My two Uncles are now on the sands, within easy reach of the human voice (mine), trying to bury one another with wooden

spades in holes of moderate depth. If necessary, I can take both my Uncles under my arm, and whip them, if they deserve it. They are four and five years of age respectively. They are the result of a

Happy Thought (occurring to a hale and hearty grandfather over seventy).—Marry again.

Reminds me of arithmetical game of *Thoughts*. "Think of a grandfather, over seventy. Double him. Add two to him. Halve him. Then subtract *him* altogether. Remainder my two Uncles." Orphans. Poor little Uncles! * * * One of these days, as their guardian, I shall have to take them to school, then to college. I shall have to write to their Master, and say: "Dear Sir,—I hear that you make some reduction on taking two Uncles instead of one. How much per annum for the pair?" &c., &c.

"P.S. I wish my Uncles to have One Shilling each pocket-money, per week, and a cold bath every morning."

My Uncles—Uncle Jack and Uncle Gil (abbreviated)—being tired of sand-digging, are commencing stone-throwing. Their immediate object is an old gentleman who is gazing at the sea. Uncle Jack's intention (he is four years old) is no doubt admirable, but his capabilities are limited. It might be called a game of "Anybody's head." This time very near mine. I awake from a reverie to the fact that stone-throwing is dangerous. I speak severely. They laugh.

Happy Thought.—Here's my Aunt Jane and the nurse.

My Uncles are given in charge.

My Aunt Jane has something to say on the subject of Health; hers. On this she prefers consulting me to going to a Doctor. My other Aunt consults me on legal questions, this one on medical.

She is aware that I once went to Aix-la-Chapelle for rheumatism, and that, more or less, ever since, I've been studying pulling myself together and picking myself up; with one exceptional time when my whole object was to pull myself down.

My Aunt Jane is a martyr to neuralgia, she describes it as Rheumatic Neuralgia. She is of an impulsive, warm-hearted disposition, and, generally speaking, would rather like talking than not.

Happy Thought.—She is "generally speaking."

She has a queer way of getting her words entangled before they

come out, leaving it to the hearer to unravel them and arrange them in a coherent sentence. In a Pagan country she would have been an Oracle.

Happy Thought.—My Sphinxian Aunt.

Having thought over her style of conversation—or her absence of style—I see that it is *not* a Mrs. Malaproprian nor a Mrs. Ramsbothamian style, but one peculiarly her own, and, on analysis, I should say it arose out of an economical desire to save time by thinking of sentence Number Two, while in the middle of sentence Number One.

She addresses me, speaking rather hurriedly, and occasionally stopping with a kind of gasp, and a surprised look, her mouth open, as if the supply of words had (as it were) been suddenly cut off at the main, “I’ve been suffering all the morning with face-ache, but whether it’s my toothjaw” (one word this) “or what, I don’t know, but I’m really afraid that I’ve got some irremedibiddle disease which——” here she gasps. Supply cut off. I take advantage of this to ask what she really means by “irremedibiddle.”

“You know very well what the word means, I’m sure, or ought to,” she replies, a little hurt.

“If you mean, Aunt, irremediable——”

[*Happy Thought* that flashes across me. *Que diable ! irremédiable !* To arrange this afterwards as a French joke, and put it down to Talleyrand or Molière.]

——“if you mean ‘irremediable,’” I continue, for the *Happy Thought* is only a mental flash which does not interrupt the sentence, “I understand.”

“Of course,” she replies, “I *said* irremediable, and I know it’s a correct word, though you always find fault with what I say, because when I was thinking about what a cureness was which couldn’t be——” here she corrects herself of her own accord—“I mean an illness was which couldn’t be cured, I thought there was one word for it, and so I looked out irremediable and found it in Dixon’s Johnsonary.”

“Johnson’s Dictionary, Aunt,” I say.

“I said so,” she returns with some dignity ; “and if I didn’t, you

know what I mean well enough, and needn't take me up for every little mistake."

She has decided that she has "Rheumatism all over her, and is not quite sure that it isn't what the Doctors call 'imperceptible gout,' which results," she adds, "in goodness knows what, and all sorts of things."

What does she propose as a cure? She answers, readily, that she would trust herself implicitly to me if I would take her where I went myself some years ago, to Aix-la-Chapelle. She has evidently made up her mind to this. I reply, that I will "turn it over." While she goes down to my two Uncles on the sands, I meditate.

Process of "Turning it over."—This year I have determined to take up farming and gardening, or gardening and farming, scientifically and (I think I foresee it in the future) profitably. Besides, in Vol. II., *Typical Developments*, I shall soon come to *Letter F.*, naturally, "*Farming*," with a note at bottom of page, "See, also, *G. Gardening*," and I shall want to write about it. My friend and adviser, Englemore, has strongly recommended me 'agricultural pursuits as a first-rate thing. As he is coming down to-morrow (unless he telegraphs, which, when once you've started him at what he calls "wiring," he generally does three or four times a day), I can consult him as to *when* I ought to begin my "farming and gardening operations." . . . I am dropping off into a drowsy state when somehow, in connection with my Aunt's notion about Aix-la-Chapelle, there occurs to me suddenly a

Happy Thought.—German Gardening.

Odd that, quite coincidentally, the two words fall naturally under "G" in *Typical Developments*, Vol. II. (if I get as far in *Vol. II.* : it *might* be Vol. X. before I reached "G"; but, anyhow, I should be prepared with material. [*Note.*—Hitherto, I've generally collected "Material" in mems and notes, on odd slips of paper, for months, and then either been unable to remember the circumstances to which they relate, or have lost them altogether, or later intelligence has rendered them valueless.]) Also, as another really very curious coincidence, under the letter "F" "*Farming in France.*"

Happy Thought.—French Farming. Or, if any difficulty about Farming, why not Floriculture? This alphabetically brings us back to “E,” when I commence with “English E. . . .” Think of some word initialled with “E,” and meaning Gardening.

Happy Thought.—Dixon’s Johnsonary. Look it out. “*Eagle—Eardrops—Earth.*” This is nearer but not *the* thing, “English Earth”—continue with Dixon’s Johnsonary—“*Ear-trumpet—Easter—Eaves.*” Eaves is suggestive of country and poetry, but, on the whole, is not sufficiently comprehensive.

Try again. “*Echo—Eddy—Eelspout—Efflorescence.*” Here we are.

Happy Thought.—English Efflorescence! The series would be (1) English Efflorescence. (2) French Farming. (3) German Gardening. Telegraph this to Popgood and Groolly. Really an idea. With illustrations. Coloured. Pigs look well in pictures, coloured. *Query*, who’ll do ’em?

My Aunt, who has dismissed Uneles Jack and Gil to their dinner—[we see them in the distance staggering about very unsteadily, Uncle Jack being in perpetual difficulties with an elastic hat-string which *won’t* keep his hat on his head for more than two minutes in anything like a breeze, and Uncle Gil who “gives” a little at the knees and has an undecided style of progression]—asks me if I’ve decided, because if so we ought to go as soon as possible in order to make Hay while the shine suns—or rather, sun shines, she means. Strange coincidence again, that she should have used the expression “make hay.”

“At all events,” she says, with a letter in her hand, “I’ve just heard that the Glymphyns have gone there: young Mr. Glymphyn is a martyr, I’m told, to Dipthatical Sytherea in one of the two if not both, and he can’t put one leg to the ground without the other, so they hope to cure him.”

“Cure him of what?” I ask.

“Sciatica,” she answers. “I said so before, only you really never *do* seem to attend to me.”

I can’t quite make up my mind. I tell her the reason. “At all events,” she says, “you might take me over, and leave me at the Glymphyns, who would be delighted to see me, and take the most possible care, and if Charlotte Glymphyn, though she’s

mottled and serried now, and her name is Borrowdaile, I fancy it will be pleasant if——" here comes the gasp, and the stream is dried up.

The Glymphyns to me are *not* an inducement. Besides, if I go again to Germany, it will be simply and solely in the interests of the letter "G"—"German Gardening"—consequently I don't want to be mixed up with nothing but English, nor do I want to live in a town. No; in a farm or German Gardener's house. Conversations with German Gardener's Daughter.

Happy Thought.—"G" stands for Gretchen.

I know my Aunt's object. She is always trying to make me what she calls "go about more." I fancy, from what she says, that she has "somebody in her eye." On this subject we have a difference of opinion. We agree to talk it over to-night. After that I shall consult Englemore.

Happy Thought.—Give it till to-morrow.

To this my Aunt replies with something about "Procrastion" being "the thief of time." I suggest "Procrastination." She returns that *that* is what she said, and adds her usual reference, which is, that if I don't believe there is such a word, I had better consult Dixon's Johnsonary.



CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER DAY AT LITTLE SHRIMPTON—ENGLEMORE THE WIRER—
 STYLE—APPEARANCE—HIS METHOD—CONSULTATION—JOEY—
 COMPLAINT—ON FARMING—IDEAS—MECHI—TO AIX.



WE EXPECT my old friend Englemore down here. We are advertised of his intention by two telegrams on Saturday, and a letter received this day. Englemore is so addicted to telegraphing, that his epistolary style has considerably suffered by a jerky habit of expressing himself, which he has acquired during a long course of what he calls "wiring."

His first telegram (for example) is "Come morrow if there wire."

This means, "I intend to come

down to Little Shrimpton to-morrow; will you be there? If so, send an answer by telegram."

Englemore's letter received this morning. He abbreviates and

initialises. "D. B." for instance with him means "Dear Boy." Here it is:

D. B. How r u? a? Met P. yesly. Asked about L. s. d. No go. Saw T. Your bus. right. All on meeting. With you to day.

Yours E.

There never was a man who was more the Complete Incomplete Letter-writer than E., I mean, Englemore.

He has, too, a conversational method all his own. He is fond of prefixing "Mr." to anything and everything, and alluding to himself as "Your little Englemore." He is about six feet, and has a military bearing. His business, I believe, is that of an accountant (whatever that may be), but he seems to be everybody's adviser, and a general rule exists among his friends "When in doubt consult Englemore."

He arrives. In a white dustcoat, as natty and bright as if he were going to escort a party of Ladies to Ascot or Goodwood. Whatever the time of the year, however dull the day, he has always a bright flower in his button-hole; and whatever the weather, and wherever he has come from, his boots are always brilliant, his hat carefully brushed and glossy, and his gloves apparently brand new and fitting perfectly. Winter is, rather than not, *his* time of year for white waistcoats.

Happy Thought.—One Englemore doesn't make a summer.

My Aunt is much taken with him, and never having met him before, behaves like all Englemore's friends do, and wishes at once to consult him. Her Rheumatic Neuralgia is the subject.

"Well," says Englemore, briskly, "I don't care about Mister Rheumatism. The Colonel, here——" this is another peculiarity of Englemore's; he gives everyone a title of some sort, but chiefly military, when talking *of* them, or *to* them. In this instance, by "Colonel" he means me. It's a little puzzling at first, but my Aunt, obtaining the key from me, listens to him with perfect equanimity—"the Colonel, here, remembers my being bedded by it for ever so long. In came Mister Mustard-plaster, and did the trick."

"You don't mecorember—I mean recollect," asks my Aunt, interrupting him quickly, "if that was for Neuralism or ——"

"Well," replies Englemore, understanding *her* as easily as she

does him, "I fancy Mister Neuralgia was on in that scene somehow. My name was diet for weeks." Then suddenly turning to her, "Do you beef, or banting?"

Another peculiarity of Englemore's is his use of substantives as verbs. To "beef" is with him, to eat much meat. To "banting" is to be generally abstemious. My Aunt answers that she has not as yet adopted any system in particular, but that, on the whole, taking one day with another, she may look upon herself as "beefing."

"Quite right, too," he observes. "Never banting, now. Not good enough for me. But I think you're quite right, about Mr. Sulphur-waters. I don't French or German myself. The Colonel" (me again) "here parleys, and he knows all the moves."

"I'm told," says my Aunt, "by others besides my nephew, that the system of baths and regimen is very venerating, or, at all events, predessing."

Happy Thought.—Evidently "enervating" and "depressing." Repeat the words properly.

My Aunt turns upon me, rather shortly, with, "Well, I *said* so."

"But," says Englemore, cheerfully, "You take the Captain" (me, under a new title) "with you, and he'll do Joey for you, and make you beam."

My Aunt nods her head, smilingly. I am convinced that she has only a very vague idea of Englemore's meaning. I have a glimmering of it. Should like to go.

After a silence, she says, "You'll forgive, Mr. Englemore, my obtusity, but what did you say my nephew could do?"

"Do Joey, Ma'am. Funniments. You've seen Punch and Judy—Punch with a stick, Joey the Clown round the corner."

Happy Thought.—When dull, "do Joey."

"You mean, he'll amuse me?" asks my Aunt, evincing considerable intelligence.

"Quite so. Should like to come, too," he says, considering the matter; "but just now coin is not my name. Your little Englemore's complaint is tick dollaroo."

I see my Aunt's mind is made up. She says, "You can take me over, and leave me with the Glymphyns, who are staying at

Aix, and then you can see the German Farms—which is what my nephew is interested in just now, Mr. Englemore.”

“Ah, yes, capital chap, Mister Pig,” he replies promptly, giving *his* summary of all farming.

I tell him that I intend taking up the subject, practically and scientifically, with a view, in fact, to letter *F* in *Typical Developments*.

“Ah, yes,” he says, “heaps of coin out of that. Go in for Mister Hothouse. Grapes three guineas a pound; not good enough for your little Englemore. Write *The Englishman’s Chicken-House Guide, or Out of the Pigstye into the Poultry*. Mister Cockadoodle pays. So does Tommy Turnip. Thousands.”

Happy Thought.—Make thousands out of Tommy Turnip.

Might (while I think of it) arrange for a small farm before I leave. I suppose farms are to be let furnished; furniture being pigs, cows, cocks and hens, and—and—what else? Odd, I can’t think of anything else. The nurse and my two little Uncles can stay there. Then I’ll leave my Aunt at Aix, examine German farming system, return here, and introduce new plans and better systems in farming all over the country.

Happy Thought.—Astonish Mechi. Introduce sulphur-baths for cows. Also *douche* and vapour. Still, the sole object of my farming must not be merely to astonish Mechi.

Happy Thought.—Introduce sulphur-baths at the Zoological Gardens. Put the Leopard into one. Advertise, “Can the Leopard change his spots? Yes, by taking sulphur-baths. Admission, 2s. 6d.”

Arrangements. Leave Englemore to see about farm in my absence. Take Aunt to Aix. Read up subject in meantime.

Happy Thought.—Many years since I was in Aix. Old friends. Never been there during *the* season. Novelty.

My Aunt alludes to her friends, the Glymphyns, being there, and the Mompisons too. Do I remember Agatha and Janita Mompison? I do. I know what my Aunt means. No. I devote myself to Science—specially Farming. A Farming Hermit. Good name, by the way, for a novel—*The Recluse of Rosedale Farm*.

Happy Thought.—Write it.

CHAPTER III.

NOVEL—REVIEWS—FURNISHING—NURSERY RHYME—TRAINING UP—
ENGLEMORE—NAMES—MY AUNT—LETTERS FROM GLYMPHYS—
QUORTSFUE—BO-PEEP—LITTLE UNCLES—POETRY—SERMONS IN
STONES—PEBBLES—THE KOO BEAGLE—REFER TO DIXON.



WRITE a Novel, I said.

Suppose it written, advertised, printed, bound, published, copies sent to newspapers, reviewed, and again advertised with Opinions of the Press. Suppose myself reading the latter.

Advertisement:—"This day is published," &c., "*The Recluse of Rosedale Farm*. Thirty Thousandth Edition. Popgood and Groolly."

Opinions of the Press:—"This is perhaps the most charming novel of the season. There is a grace, a lightness, and yet such a depth and," &c., &c.—*Morning Paper*.

"If every novel of the present day was only half as good as *The Recluse of Rosedale Farm*, the ground on which

our objections are founded would be cut from under our feet."—*The Collective Review*.

"Mr. Thingummy has done the literary State good service in this new work. In the character of *Grace Whatshername*, the *demi-monde* is drawn by a master-hand."—*Piccadilly Gazette*.

"The strictest Materfamilias need not be afraid of placing *The Recluse* in the hands of her daughters. There is not a word, not an expression, not a description, but breathes the true spirit of poetry, piety, Christian charity, and virtue."—*The Churchwoman's Mirror*.

"We congratulate the author upon the latest work which has fallen from his pen. *The Recluse of Rosedale Farm* will place him in the first rank of our most distinguished novelists."—*Dumshire Chronicle*.

"Bustling, lively, racy of the soil."—*Sporting Standard*.

"True to life, outspoken, and though perhaps more suitable to the study than the drawing-room, yet neither Dowager nor Demoiselle will take much harm, while they will learn a great deal, from its perusal."—*Colosseum*.

"This romance, or novel, supplies a genuine want. *The Recluse of Rosedale Farm*, we have no hesitation in saying, is a work that will live. The Rabbi's Sermon is admirable, while, indeed, the entire picture of village life, at its purest, is one which may make us justly proud of our country."—*Jewish Journal*.

"No more scathing diatribe against the Hebraic usurers of the present day has ever been penned than the chapter in which is described the interview between *Geoffrey* and old *Shi Lock Kerr*. The character of the Jew is entirely new, and, as far as our memory serves us, perfectly original. His despair, when *Jessie Kerr*, having robbed him of his treasures, elopes with *Lord Renzo*, is almost too intense."—*Happy Dispatch*.]

Englemore is furnishing a house in town. On this subject he consults my Aunt, reciprocating her confidence in him. My Aunt shily supposes he is going to be married. Englemore admits that he is giving a look round. This interests my Aunt. So does the subject of furniture. She strongly recommends stained floors, and carpet in the middle. This idea seems to take Englemore's fancy. My Aunt promises to give him, before he leaves, the name of the man who stained the floor of the house that her friend Mr. John Skimpsher built, where it answered admirably.

Happy Thought (to myself).—This is the house that Skimpshire built; this is the Floor of the House, &c.; this is the Man who stained, &c.; this is the Address of the Man who, &c. Nursery

rhymes adapted to everyday use. This worked out might be a playful education for children. Instead of teaching them nonsense, teach them sense, but, so to speak, nonsensically.

Englemore "trains up" to town, and leaves us, being very busy about his new house, where to-morrow, he tells us, "he's got Mister Carpenter coming." I remind him of what I want him to do for me, and he promises to "keep his eye open for Farm."

I give him I say *carte blanche* to do what he likes in my absence. He replies, "All right, Colonel," and we seem to understand each other perfectly. There is an air of business about this off-hand way of settling a matter which is very assuring. On consideration, after he has gone, it occurs to me that he scarcely required any *carte blanche* from me to do what he liked. Hope he won't think it all a joke, or that I'm, as he calls it, "doing Joey." However, we did seem to understand one another.

Happy Thought.—In order that any matter of business should be perfectly intelligible, nothing should ever be "understood." Make this into what Englemore would call Mister Epigram, and put it down to Horne Tooke.

Will write and explain. I do so. By way of answer I receive a telegram. "Yes. Agreed. What you said. Right." Before I have time to find out what on earth he means, another telegram arrives. It is "Ask who stains floors. Where."

My Aunt, to whom I show this, suddenly remembers having forgotten to give Mr. Dangerfield (she seldom gets a name correctly, and never on a short acquaintance)—"Englemore," I say. Well, she supposes I know whom she means, and she forgot to give him his address. "The stainerer who's an upholster," she informs me rapidly, "lives at—dear me! let me see—a street near what was the Chiniton—I mean the Chinese Exhibition, years ago. Number Thirty-one, I think it is; but I'll look it out, and your friend, Mr.—Mr.—Appleton——"

Happy Thought.—Nod "Yes."

My Aunt means Englemore, but why shouldn't he be "Appleton," to save discussion?

"Yes, he has only to go to him, and mention my name. He will find him a most respectably eldable person."

Happy Thought.—Respectably eldable person. Evidently standing for “respectable elderly person.” The words sound like a quotation from what might be called the Drunken Dictionary.

Next Day.—Aunt receives letter from the Glymphyns.

She tells me that “I must write and say the exact day when I’m coming, as Janita Glymphyn tells me that, in that case, she has seen some lodgings which Captain Quortesfue will take for me.”

Captain who? Think whom my Aunt means, as it annoys her to suggest a “proper name.”

Happy Thought.—Found it out. “Quortesfue,” means Fortesque. Captain Fortescue.

All clear. Make arrangements for little Uncles Jack and Gil at Little Shrimpton; then, day after to-morrow, depart.

Happy Thought (musically).—*Partant pour le Soufre-ia* (i, a, to fill up “*Mister Metre*”).

My Aunt would rather be left alone to pack without my assistance, or anybody’s.

Happy Thought.—Leave her alone. Suggestion of *Little Bo-Peep*,—

Let her alone,
She’ll, going from home,
Leave lots of things behind her.

On thinking over this Nursery Rhyme, it occurs to me that there must be something radically wrong with an educational system which commences by teaching the infant mind that “alone” rhymes with “home.” How many gushing poets have been lost to the world by this!

Happy Thought.—Lots, I hope.

I go out and sit on the beach, watching my little Uncles.

They are never tired of digging in the sand, apparently with the idea of ultimately making a new basin for the sea to wash itself in, nor do they ever weary of varying the amusement with an occasional quarter of an hour devoted to stone-throwing.

Beach Thoughts.—There are few stronger temptations presented

to the human mind than that of stone-throwing. Moral of above for inward application.

Children can't resist it. The smaller the child, the larger the stone. This is experimental stone-throwing. The Boy [who is "father to the man"—and why not if my Uncles are about thirty years or so younger than their nephew]—the Boy delights in distance. Distance lends enchantment to the stone. He likes to show how far he can make a stone go.

Happy Thought.—Another moral for inward application: Teach him how far he can make a shilling go, and reduce his pocket-money.

Beach Thoughts (same subject continued).—The Youth does fancy tricks with stones. Chiefly Ducks and Drakes. [*Evident inward application again.*]

Happy Thought.—Youth must have its fling.

Old man sits quietly down and throws small stones at intervals into the sea. The older the man the smaller the pebble.

Sad and Poetic Inspiration.—

Morals mingle
With the shingle.

Also, subject for a classical cartoon, *The Fleeting Hours playing upon the Sands of Time.*

Nurse comes to remove Uncles Jack and Gil. They remonstrate, having one more hole to make. Uncle Gil has in his pail a choice collection of small green crabs. Nurse empties the pail, and that is the result of *his* morning's work. He is a little downcast at first, as I fancy he has regarded them with the eye of an epicure. Uncle Gil tries to watch them all at once crawling off in different directions. I am sure that there passes through his mind a vague hope that they will all meet again (he and the same crabs) in happier times, when perhaps they will have grown bigger and we can have them for tea. Gil is a quiet boy, with a roving eye. When perfectly still, and smiling to himself, I have no doubt that his mind is arranging (on the theory of "Unconscious Cerebration") some deep scheme for the future. He is only five years old, and my theory to account for his reserved demeanour is, that

the greatness of his mental operations stagger him. He is deep in plots and conspiracies. An infant Machiavelli. Uncle Jack is noisy and active. I ascertain that it was Uncle Jack who collected the crabs, but it was Uncle Gil who offered his pail for their reception, and who ultimately was walking off with them when Justice (represented by the Nurse) interfered.

Adieux to little Uncles. Aunt and boxes ready. My Aunt is perpetually reassuring herself of the wisdom of the step she is now taking for getting rid of the "Rheumalgic Neuralism" (*vide* Dixon's Johnsonary).

"Charlotte—Mrs.—dear me—you know who *was* Miss—dear me—Miss Glymphyn, of course, though it really is dreadful to forget names like this, and I can't help being afraid that the Rheumery weakens the memory—but what I was saying was, that in the letter this morning she says her mother, who's laid up there, can recommend me to a Doctor who's a thorough lecelebrity."

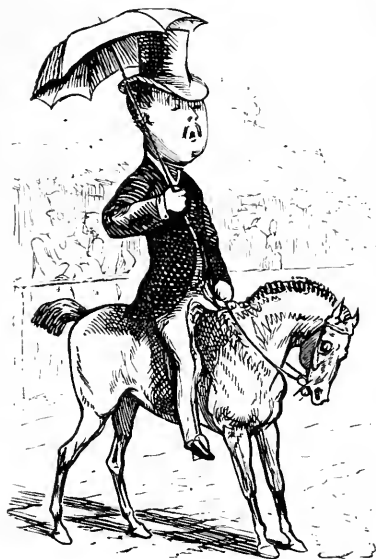
"A—a—what, Aunt, is he?" (*Wanted* Dixon's Johnsonary.)

"I say," she replies, slowly, "that the doctor to whom they go is a thorough celebrity. You'll like the Glymphyns, I'm sure; Janita's a very pretty girl, and very sensible, too; and they're all so musical, so's young Mr. Glymphyn, who's a great student of Historal Natyry—I mean" (she corrects herself in a marked manner, as much as to convey to me that, *she* knows, thank you, *when* she makes a mistake)—"I mean, of course, Natural History"; and I dare say that's why they've made Captain Quortefue's acquaintance, who, I told you, was there, and as she writes, Janita says to me in her letter she must finish her letter as they're making such a noise with practising duetts between the piano and koo beagle."

[*Happy Thought*.—"Koo Beagle," evidently "*Key Bugle*," *vide* Dixon's Johnsonary.]

CHAPTER IV.

UP TO TOWN—STILL ON FARMING—NOTES BY THE WAY—ANIMAL—
VEGETABLE—TELFORD—MORE ON FARMS—QUESTION—ANSWER
—PLATFORMS—DIXON'S AGAIN—THE GIPSY—THE FIRST JOKE—
MORE FARMING.



GOING up to town by train, a really Happy Thought occurs to me, suggested by a conversation which I can't help overhearing. The conversation is about farming. The conversers (or "verconers" according to Dixon's Johnscnary) are two agriculturists.

Happy Thought.—Gentlemen-farmers. Be a Gentleman, and be a Farmer. Equal parts judiciously mixed. Must listen; occasionally pick up, and then note down. This repeated often must be valuable.

What I gather from their conversation (which is difficult to catch, as they talk towards the window, occasionally looking out). That is a capital thing to roll a meadow. Always give top dressings to—[What it is I can't hear, but can fill this up another time.] That hay won't be so dear this year as last. That you "give it 'em green" in the summer. "'Em" refers, I suppose, to horses, and "green" to grass. That some people *don't* "give it 'em green." Hay is now three fifteen to four ten. I wonder if this is by the peck or the bushel. One agriculturist observes, that "he finds it best in certain cases to give his animal roots."

Query.—What animal? What roots? What certain occasions?

The other gentleman-farmer agrees with him. Yes ; certainly roots. Is *he* (his friend) well off for roots? Yes, it appears he is tolerably well, but won't want 'em now. The other one supposes that he won't. The train stops—it is going to stop very often, as my Aunt Jane dislikes express travelling—and a stout gentleman in a light suit gets in with a friend.

Happy Thought.—Telford (in the light suit). The *very* man I want to see.

Curious chance ! Quite a coincidence ! He is a great hand at farming, agriculture, horticulture, and chicken-culture. I introduce him to my Aunt. He introduces his friend, and we are supposed now to know each other. At the same moment the gentleman-farmers descend.

Happy Thought.—Consult Telford. Tell him my plans. Going to see a German Farm.

“Aha !” he laughs at once. I know. Seen 'em in toys. German trees with Christmas things on 'em.” And this notion amuses him immensely. His friend smiles, as an acquaintance. Aunt Jane is amused. Telford has such a remarkably jolly laugh, that to hear him is enough to set other people off without knowing the joke. He shakes a good deal in laughing, and from a twinkle in his eye one is apt to fancy that he knows another joke worth two of the one he's apparently enjoying now.

“And what are you doing here ?” This *is my* question. On consideration, indiscreet, because if he doesn't wish to tell me “what he is doing here,” he must either be rude, and retort with “What that's to you ?” or must tell a lie.

Happy Thought.—To add immediately playfully, “I won't press the question.”

This again (on consideration) is indiscreet. It conveys (I see it does) to my Aunt the idea that she is in a carriage with a *Don Juan* weighing about sixteen stone, or a Cupid of about forty-five unable to get a pair of wings to carry him.

Telford replies that he has come to this part to look after a pony.

I never yet met him, and I've known him some time, when he wasn't going somewhere to look after a pony, or when he hadn't “just heard of something to suit him.”

Happy Thought.—A Pony. Does he think it would suit *me*! His natural reply is the question, "Do you want one?" I may safely say "Yes" to this, because I always want one, and never had one. Besides, with Telford and his friend (who are both very much sporting-men) it puts one on the same platform for the time being to want a pony. And being on the same platform one can converse.

Happy Thought.—Always get on the same platform with another fellow, if possible.

Telford looks me over, and turning to his friend says, "he knows the very thing to suit me."

Happy Thought.—To look perfectly delighted. *Think* (to *myself*).—Must get out of this again somehow. Perhaps I might be saddled with a pony—(paddled with a soney, *vide* Dixon's Johnsonary) before I knew where I was, so to speak. When I've got the farm I *shall* want one.

"I'll tell you who told me about him," says Telford, turning to his friend, and referring to the pony.

"Who?" asks his friend.

"Ned, the Gipsy," replies Telford.

I watch with interest the effect of this information on his friend. I rather expect him (I don't know why) to pooh-pooh Ned the Gipsy.

"Um!" returns his friend, thinking it over, "I saw the Gipsy with the pony at Twigham Meeting. He wanted me to have it." Here he suddenly breaks off, as if the subject were an unpleasant one to revert to. It leaves me in a reverie as to whether he did have it or not. I should like to ask him. I feel that it's an unfinished tale. The tale of a pony unfinished. Wonder, by the way, who invented this *jeu de mots* on "tale" and "tail." How it must have set the table in a roar when first said. I should like to hear the history of The First Joke. Date 3 A.D. "A.D." here means Ante-Deluge. There were some very queer words then, suitable for *jeu de mots*.

Happy Thought.—For a proverb, There are good and bad jokes in all languages. A sort of Proverb. Joke-Explorers might make

voyages, like Dr. Livingstone, in search of a joke, or like Diogenes, with a lantern, in quest of a good honest joke. Happy Title for Tales of Adventure, The Joke Catchers.

Ch. I. How they heard of a joke. *Ch. II.* How they set out to catch that joke. *Ch. III.* How they heard two Joke-Crackers in the distance. *Ch. IV.* How they came on the Joke-Crackers' tracks—(good phrase this for Dixon's Johnsonary. Ask my Aunt to try it, and see what she makes of it). *Ch. V.* How they came on an extinct Volcano, which had busted itself with laughter. *Ch. VI.* How they lost their way in the *Pun-jab*, where the *Pun-jabberers* dwell. *Ch. VII.* How they couldn't see the joke. *Ch. VIII.* How several weeks passed, and *yet* they couldn't see the joke. *Ch. IX.* How at last one of their party made a shot at the joke. *Ch. X.* How the joke fell flat. *Ch. XI.* How one of their party decided that it was no joke. *Ch. XII.* How, at all events, they all said they'd heard of a much better joke than that. *Ch. XIII.* How they set out again. *Ch. XIV.* How they did not catch that joke, Brave Boy! But being taken by the *Punjabberers* and Joke-Crackers were cruelly sold. *Ch. XV.* How they could only escape by coming across a very broad joke, and a very dangerous joke. *Ch. XVI.* How they came to a kingdom where their motto was, *Pro aris et Joci*s for our Altars and Jokes. *Ch. XVII.* How they were introduced to the Best Joke that ever was made. *Ch. XVIII.* How they laughed at it, and wouldn't listen to the Worst Joke. *Ch. XIX.* How the Worst Joke being irritated, fought the Best Joke. *Ch. XX.* How the Worst took Best. *Ch. XXI.* How the Worst retaliated upon the Joke-Explorers, and ordered the Joke-Crackers to tickle their fancies and the Word-Twisters to torment their ears, until at length the tears poured down the cheeks of the Joke-Explorers. *Ch. XXII.* How, finally, they died o' laughing. . . .

All this out of a Pony's tail!

One hour in the train passed. One more.

Telford says, after a pause, "He'll go in harness, quiet to ride and drive, and up to weight."

"The very thing I should like," I say, with a mental reservation to the effect, "and the very thing I don't mean to have."

My Aunt interposes, "You can't possibly want a pony." I am a little hurt at this.

"Why not?" I ask.

"Well," she says, "I've never seen you ride."

Telford and his friend smile. I protest (because it really *is* annoying) against my Aunt's insinuation. "I've not ridden for two years, but I used to hunt regularly."

"Ah!" says Telford, interested. "What hounds used you to go with?"

Happy Thought.—None in particular. Sometimes Leicestershire, sometimes Dorsetshire; also Hertfordshire, and—and—many other packs. I revert mentally and especially to the Brighton Harriers. In talking to thoroughly sporting and hunting men like Telford, its best not—(I've found this out by experience)—it's best not to boast much about runs with the Brighton Harriers. There's so little peril "by flood and field" connected with the B.H. The most you can say is to a friend who's been out with them, "That was a nasty hill you came down, when you got off and walked," or "That was a stiff bit of country up that hill where I was obliged to dismount." Also, "There was some awkward ruts in that last ploughed field;" and then with enthusiasm, "It was a splendid burst across those turnips!!" And, cunningly, "I think that ditch (2 feet by 1) or that furze bush (2 feet high) choked off a few of them."

"Well," says my Aunt, with something of irony in her tone which doesn't suit her, "I'm sure I wouldn't have said so if I hadn't thought it. But I've never seen you on horseback, and really wasn't aware until you told me now that you were even a tolerant equestable."

Explanation wanted. Telford and friend look at me and smile. "You mean," I say to her, "that you did not think that I was even a tolerable Equestrian."

"I said so," returns my Aunt. (*Vide* Dixon's Johnsonary as usual.)

CHAPTER V.

WE JOURNEY UP TO TOWN AND DISCUSS POULTRY, EGGS, AND
 AGRICULTURAL SUBJECTS—PIGS—PRIZES—PARLIAMENT—LABOUR
 —ADVERTISING—CHICKENS AGAIN—ON TO COWS—CRIPPLES—
 NOTES AND MEMS MADE ON THIS OCCASION.



WE DROP the Pony, and come to farming operations generally. Telford and his friend know a good deal about poultry.

Happy Thought.—
 Draw 'em out.

Telford's friend will have nothing but Cochins. Telford himself says, "No, have Dorkings and Spanish." Telford wants us to guess how many eggs he had from November to February. I am inclined to say, thought-

fully, "Well, let me see"—as if I were making a stupendous calculation—"six a day." Telford's friend asks, "How many hens?" I note this question as being naturally *the* common-sense one to put to a man who wants you to guess about eggs. I wonder how it is that I didn't at once think of this question. I was simply occupying myself with the vaguest probabilities without any *data* to go upon. Telford's friend, having obtained his *data*, which means fifty hens, expresses his guarded opinion that Telford *ought* to have had a good lot of eggs. Telford replies that, as a matter of fact, he *had*, and informs us that they num-

bered over two thousand. "Put 'em at twopence apiece," says he, knowingly, "and that's money."

My Aunt chimes in, in a hurry, "I'm sure you must find it very amusing, and I dare say where you cannot always calocate on such a very returnable remark—I mean," she says, with a sudden gasp, "a very remarkable return of eggs, the mere looking after and attending to the chickens, as we used to do at home, where we always kept Dorkshires and Fowl-door Barns, as I told my nephew, and I believe they're the best after all,"—gasp to recover her sentence—"on the whole I should say that, after all, it's far more repusing than mofitable." [Evidently, "more amusing than profitable," *vide* Dixon's Johnsonary.]

Telford's friend now informs us that *he* has sold eggs at fourpence apiece. We all say, "Indeed!"

Mental Calculation.—Sixty eggs at fourpence equal a pound. If this could be done every day, evidently there would be "a fortune," as Englemore would put it, "out of Mister Chicken."

Happy Thought.—To ask Telford's friend, can he do this (this meaning sixty eggs at fourpence apiece) regularly.

He adds, decidedly, "O no, nothing like it. And then," he adds, "you must deduct for their food."

Their food? I always had an idea that it cost nothing to keep poultry; that, in fact, you gave them anything,—chiefly, perhaps, pepper.

"Lots of oyster-shells," says Telford.

"Greens," says Telford's friend

"Yes," rejoins Telford, "and nettles."

Make useful notes for the future out of this. I can speak with some authority as to fowls, as I once kept seven in a chicken-house at the Cottage (given up now some years since) where, I remind Telford, with the air of a man who's reared prize fowls, he may remember to have seen them.

"Yes," says Telford, in his brusque and hearty way, "I recollect."

"I had some good ones there," I say, knowingly. This is for the benefit of Telford's friend, who is inclined to be supercilious in poultry matters.

I rather hope that Telford will have forgotten all about them, and corroborate my estimate of their worth.

"Well," says Telford, shutting one eye, and, as it were, putting himself back three years for the sake of recalling the event of his visit, "well—um—" this doubtfully; he evidently has put himself back, and is once more by the side of my Fowl-house, "um—yes. You had one old Cochin——"

"Very fine old Hen she was," I say, in my character of The Prize Poultry Rearer.

Happy Thought (in theatrical form.)—My character for this occasion only, solely for The Benefit of Telford's Friend.

"Yes," replies Telford, "that was a fine old Hen. I gave her to you. But she was too old, and the others were a measly lot." A measly lot! If I had expected this I wouldn't have asked his opinion. He continues: "I recollect telling you then that they'd have done much better as Mulligatawny than as fowls."

Telford's friend laughs, my Aunt smiles, and Telford laughs as he repeats, "Horrid measly lot."

Happy Thought.—Treat what he says as a joke. Then Telford's friend will think that they weren't "a measly lot," after all.

But, additional mem, for future Farming use; note it down as "P. M. M.—Poultry—Measles—Mulligatawny."

As we've not got much more time in the train, I ask Telford and his friend, if they've, both or either, ever kept pigs.

Yes, both. "Then," to come to the point, "what would you say about Pigs?"

"In what way," asks Telford, "for sale, for fattening, or for breeding?"

Evidently more ways than one of keeping a pig.

Happy Thought—For Sale. Undoubtedly keep a pig for sale. You can't make money out of him unless you *do* sell him.

Telford's friend here interposes. He says, "There's only one way to make pigs pay. Buy 'em young, very cheap, keep 'em until they want something to eat, and then sell 'em. I can buy mine at four shillings, and sell 'em at fifteen, and you've spent nothing on their feed."

"But," I ask, diffidently, "they must be very thin?" I was going to say "very hungry," only I don't like to accuse Telford's friend of cruelty to animals, point blank; besides, it may not be considered as cruelty in farming operations.

"No," he says, then adds, as if explaining away any doubt we might have had on the subject, "they're not *prize* pigs, of course." As this appears to be satisfactory to Telford and his friend, I merely reply that "of course, they're not expected to be Prize Pigs," to which Telford's friend returns, "No, of course not." And so the subject drops.

Happy Thought.—Our conversation in the way of taking up and dropping subjects is quite like a Parliamentary report. Some one gets up and asks, in clear type (indicative of importance of person or subject), whether the—whoever it is—is ready to explain whatever it is. Whereupon up gets the—whoever it is—and does *not* explain it to anybody's satisfaction. Then, when you'd expect a hot controversy on a question involving so many weighty interests, you find nothing more said, but merely the words, "The subject was then dropped;" and in a jerky manner, up comes the heading of another matter altogether—"Mines," perhaps—and up gets some one who "wants to know," and is cheerfully answered by some one who *doesn't* know, and then *that* subject is dropped.

So we suddenly take up the topic of Labour. Telford's friend, who lives in the south-west of England, supposes that Telford, who lives in the South Midland, finds labour dear. This, I apprehend, is a really vital question.

Telford *does* find labour dear. I should like to know—always for information—how many men are necessary where Pigs and Poultry are kept. (This sounds like an Advertisement—"Wanted, by a Young Man under Twenty-two, a Place under a Butler, where a Pig is kept"—or something of that sort. Forget exact instance. It merely flashes across me while I put the question.) Telford says it all depends upon the size. Of the place he means, not the pigs.

I say, of course naturally; and, as a premiss to go upon, say six pigs and fifty chickens, with cows to match.

"Two men," says Telford's friend, "would do all *you* (meaning me) want." He means all that the Pigs, &c., want. I nod.

"Now," says he, "I'll give you a wrinkle." We listen attentively. "When you want labour cheap, don't get the regular fellows. You'll have to give them just what every one else does, p'raps more. But you get Cripples." Here he winks at us knowingly.

"Cripples!" exclaims my Aunt.

"Yes," continues Telford's friend. "Get a fellow whom no one will have, because he's got a game leg or one arm, or weak in the eyes. Farmers won't have him, because he's only half a man. He'll be only too glad to come to you. Half a man, half a man's price. You'll find that, just to show what he *can* do, he'll work double the amount of a sound 'un. Of course," he says, reflectively, "if they're weak-backed 'uns, the extra steam they put on floors 'em, and they go off the hooks early; but," he adds, in a reassuring tone, seeing that this last piece of information has made us a bit gloomy, "but you soon get another. They'd rather come to you than go to the Workhouse; and the Workhouse, if it had got 'em, would give you something to take 'em. It's a capital plan."

Happy Thought.—Motto for Telford's Friend's Farm, "Go it, ye Cripples!"

Notes on Farming gathered from conversation overheard or joined in during train-journey:—

1. That you give horses green hay in summer. [*Query* when it's "green hay" isn't it grass? When does grass become hay? Is all cut grass hay? if so, mown grass is at once hay. Must find a Dixon's Farmonary—I mean a Farmer's Dictionary, and look it all out. Give my mind to this subject and the result, as "Your little Englemore" puts it, will be, in time, thousands out of Mister Turnips and Colonel Pigs.]

2. That in certain cases you give your animal roots. *Mem.* to find out which animal, and what roots.

3. Roll your meadow. [Find out why, when, with what, and how much for labour. How many cripples to roll a meadow?]

4. Poultry. Give them nettles, pepper, and oyster-shells. [The result would be probably curried eggs. But go into this more fully.] When Hens get old, or measly, make 'em into Mulligatawny. The worse the hen, the better the Mulligatawny. To

induce them to lay, give 'em chalk eggs. [Can't understand the principle of this. Must master the principle with a view to scientific farming. Telford's friend didn't know "why," but so it was. The only other use of chalk eggs that I've hitherto known has been to encourage Divers. You threw in a chalk egg and a Diver went in for it. Six chalk eggs for threepence. A chalk egg is a sort of doll to a Hen. And yet when one comes to reflect—but it is evident that as yet I have *not* mastered the principle.]

5. Pigs. Buy a pig for four shillings, give him nothing to eat (this is most inexpensive), and sell him for fifteen. Evidently profitable. But how to escape, ultimately, Prosecution for Pig Persecution by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!

I remember a book which might be of some use to me—*Our Farm of Four Acres, and what we made of it*, or a name something like it.

Happy Thought.—If I began farm-keeping now, I might in a few months' time publish a book entitled *Our Farm of Four Acres, and the Jolly Mess we made by it*.

6. As to labour. *Happy Thought*.—Cripples.

Arrived. London. Tickets and Terminus. My Aunt refers to her watch and her appetite. "Two o'clock. That's very fortunate," she remarks, "because we can stop at the refreshment-rooms and have our luncheon. I really am quite up-set for the rest of the day," she explains to Telford, "unless I follow out my invariable plan, and always have my puncheon lucktually." ["My luncheon punctually," *vide* Dixon's Johnsonary, as usual.]

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLEMORE AGAIN — ON FURNISHING — DIFFICULTIES — CHANGING STATE—COMMISSION—HIS POEM—NOOKING—NEW GRAMMAR—ENGLEMORE'S VERBS—DRIVE TO ST. KATHERINE'S WHARF—MILBURD—MRS. MILBURD—"OFF" SAYS THE STRANGER.



UR "little" Englemore calls on us with information. "I've got," he says, "Mister Berth for you. Best Cabin. One for the Colonel, and one for you, Ma'am." My Aunt thanks him, and requests further particulars, which he proceeds to give, in his own way, "*Baron Vosey*, Sunday at Twelve. Be there rather before, say eleven-thirty, because of Mister Luggage. Horrid bore, Peter Portmanteau."

I tell him that I quite remember all these details, having been by the *Baron* several times. Upon this Englemore remarks to my Aunt, "Then

you're Little All-right, Ma'am. The Colonel knows the ropes. Wish I was going with you. Why can't he? Why?" he answers, "because, first of all, there's Mister Business in Town. Then there's Freddy Furniture in New House. Just finished. Man

stained floors. Gas laid on. Kitchen stove gone mad. Went home the other evening, found Mrs. Cook, swimming about. Bobby Boiler burst ; no dinner for your little Englemore, and jolly mess everywhere."

My Aunt condoles with him. "She knows," she says, "by experience the nuisance of furnishing and bursters boiling." She means boilers bursting, of course, and, "said so." But, she supposes, silyly, "that Mr. Englemore is only preparing to renounce the bachelor state."

"Ah," says Englemore, blushing slightly, "don't know yet. We shall see. Settle up for Freddy Furniture, and settle down afterwards." Then turning to me, "I'll be on the look-out for Colonel Farm. I'm going into the Midlands for a week's fishing. Going to see Major Trout. Catch him at home. Then you'll be back before Gregory Grouse and Master Oyster turn up. If you see anything in the way of furniture while you're away, don't forget your Little Englemore."

On his saying good-bye to us we once more allude, pleasantly, to his intended (evidently intended) marriage. My Aunt, who is not to be put off the scent of a genuine match by any pretence of his as to fishing, observes that she supposes he is to bring home a bride from the Midlands? "Aha!" he returns to my Aunt, "You know too much for me, Ma'am. Talking of that, I was trying to write a song, you know," this to me. I nod, but don't know ; however, that's of no importance. "'A Hieland lass my love was born.' I made it 'A Midland lass my love was born,' only I couldn't get any farther. Mr. Poetry is not my name. Don't know how it's done. Good-bye. I'll have my eye on something for you. I know sort of thing. A Nook, that's what you want. You'd nook all day if you had one. Do Mister Shepherd : pastoral symphony : crook and nook. Good-bye. Love to Mister Germany." I notice that he has at once made a verb of "nook." In Englemore's grammar——

Happy Thought.—Grammar of the Future, by Your Little Englemore.—In such a Grammar, "to Nook" would signify "to remain in a secluded spot in the country," and would be conjugated "I nook, Thou nookest, He nooks, &c." *Imperative*—"Nook!" *i.e.* "Go and remain in a secluded spot in the country,"

which might gradually come to mean, "Go to Jericho, or Bath, or Coventry." *Imperfect*—"I was nooking," *i.e.* "When I was living (or used to live) in a secluded spot in the country," &c. But what a saving of words! Then, at dinner—"Will you mutton? Do you cucumber?" or, while one *is* about it, with a new grammar of the future, why not "Cucumberez-vous?" or "Cucumber-you!" "You'll beer, I suppose?"

"I'll wire," continues Englemore, "if Mister Farm turns up. By the way, if you see Sammy Sideboard, or Major Armchair anywhere, wire price, as, at present, my name's Mister Furniture. Good-bye."

And so he leaves us, having probably, as my Aunt suggests, been running on about his furniture, Major trout, and his secluded Slooks ("secluded Nooks," *vide* my Aunt's Dixon's Johnsonary), in order to avoid any further questioning about his marriage.

Aunt, under the impression that St. Katherine's Wharf is at least ten miles from any known centre, determines upon starting early. Usual sombre drive through the *urbs mortuorum*, with the shutters up on Sunday morning. City looking as if it had been hard at work over-night trying to scrub itself clean, and *couldn't* for its very life get the dirt out of its ruts and wrinkles. Lines of hard-featured respectabilities going to church; Paterfamilias looking devotionally uncomfortable in his clean, starched collars. If it wasn't for Materfamilias and the girls, who require his presence as a background to their Sunday finery, he would have preferred stopping at home, in his shirt-sleeves to "tot" up his accounts.

Now we leave Eastern Christianity, and, penetrating farther into the Oriental quarter, we come into a Parochial Palestine! Here, on one side are the names of Mister Moses, S. Isaacs, and Jacob Marx, faced, on the other, by Solomons, Cohen, and Aaron Levi. Genuine good old D'Israelie titles, ungenteelised as yet by substituting an "a" for an "o," or a "y" for an "i." It seems as if a whole colony of German Jews had landed here, and, having been thoroughly knocked up by the voyage, never cared to unsettle themselves again.

St. Katherine's Wharf, intended for the arrival and departure of passengers. St. Katherine's Wharf offers the smallest amount of accommodation possible. Abroad, whether at a small station, or

on a quay, or at any place specially intended for passenger traffic, the traveller, generally, will find comfort, and even elegance. But, in England—*generally* not.

“Well, thank Heaven,” says my Aunt, piously, “that it doesn’t rain, and we can stand on the wharf among the luggage.”

The *Baron* is not yet ready to receive us—he is being washed and tidied.

My Aunt occupies herself in asking me if I don’t think every fresh arrival on the wharf is a foreigner. She founds her remarks on the supposition that most of the *voyageurs* must inevitably be foreigners; or, if they are not *now*, she has some sort of idea they will become foreigners during the voyage, and appear as something quite different (as in a Pantomime) when we shall land in Antwerp.

“That’s a German, I’m sure,” says she, pointing to a stout man in spectacles, with a young lady, rather pretty, in a costume of many colours.

Happy Thought.—To call her “Josephine,” on account of the costume of many colours.

The pair are standing near us. My Aunt is commencing some remarks on the young lady’s high-heeled boots, and other peculiarities of what she considers foreign toilette, when Mister German turns to me, and says, with an accent (from the North of England), “Can you tell me, Zur, when this *Baron Osz*’ll be ready to take us aboard?”

I give him my opinion. Pretty girl his—daughter? or niece?

Happy Thought.—As a co-voyageur, to speak to her *sans façon*, “Is she a good sailor?” She is shy and simpers.

“She doesn’t know,” she says, simpering. “She’s never yet been to sea,” simpering. Northern accent.

Happy Thought (Tennysonian).—“Northern Farmer” and his daughter. “Property, Property,” &c. Perhaps *he’s* going to examine German Agriculture. Pick up a lot from him on the voyage. Always picking up.

Happy Thought (Musical).—“Where are you going to, my pretty maid?” Keep this to myself.

The Baron is almost ready to receive us. There is a good deal of shouting in an unknown tongue by two dapper gentlemen in smart naval uniforms, a considerable amount of gesticulation, confused noises of chains, cranes, planks, engines, and plunging of horses objecting to being embarked on board the gallant *Osy*.

Ancient porters, who look as if they couldn't carry a band-box, stagger away under the weight of my Aunt's trunks, and a burly fellow with a badge—in Englemore's grammar of the future, "A Badger"—insists upon relieving me of my hand-bag.

Happy Thought.—Keep my eye on him.

Six porters stagger in, and against us, with boxes, portmanteaus, and bags; then a maid-servant with rugs, bundle of parasols and sticks; then a sharp-looking, funny little man, looking as if he'd been taken directly off a German bon-bon box, carrying a plaid, a small bag, and another bundle of sticks, umbrellas and parasols. "Dis vay, Sir!" he is saying to a lady and gentleman following him. Two porters deposit a large portmanteau almost on my Aunt's toes preparatory to heaving it up again and carrying it on board. The name attracts my attention.

"Milburd," in large letters.

My Aunt takes my arm. I turn and see, no doubt about it, Milburd with a lady on *his* arm. We recognise one another. He asks me if I know the Duchess! The who? I say looking towards the lady on his arm. "Now, then, Sir, this way," shouts somebody. More directions in unknown tongue.

"Now, *Sir!*" says gruffly, just behind me, a voice which apparently proceeds from a huge box on two legs. My Aunt pulls me to what I believe is called "the gangway." The Northern Farmer has his northern elbow in my ribs; he is tugging at his daughter (or niece), my Aunt is tugging at me, Milburd is tugging at the Duchess, boxes in front of us, boxes behind us, boxes threatening our heads and toes, a vague fear pervading every one that the *Baron* will get tired and suddenly steam off without us, and so we all crowd on to one another, hustle, crush, fight, struggle, and fume, until we suddenly find ourselves on board.

"This way, Sir!" remonstrates some official belonging to the *Baron*, and we are on board. More crush. People hurrying below

(they call it "down-stairs") and demanding beds and accommodation.

Happy Thought.—Got our berths. We shall be Mister Comfortable. Polite and cool steward at table taking down names in a book, and apportioning berths to those who haven't previously engaged them. Milburd is explaining, jocosely as usual, "You needn't give us the state cabin, as Her Royal Highness"—

"Name, Sir?" asks the Steward in the most business-like way. People about, thinking that Milburd is only wasting time, don't laugh, I am glad to say. He answers, "Mr. and Mrs. Milburd and Friend."

Milburd married !!



CHAPTER VII.

THE VOYAGE COMMENCES—ANXIETY—POCKETS—PUNS—BASCOE—
NAME—MILBURD'S FUN—ENGLEMORE AGAIN—AXWORTH—
WHAT'S IN A NAME?—ALL FOR SHORE—LAST WORDS—GOING,
GOING, GONE!



PRIOR to starting and on board the *Baron*.—My Aunt's one anxiety is as to her luggage. "Will it be searched?" that's what's she wants to know. She is positive that it *will* be searched, and hopes that I have the keys all ready. Keys? of course I have them safely in my . . . for the first time it strikes me that I have *not* them safely in my . . . Good Gracious! . . . I really do believe . . . "Lost them!" exclaims my Aunt. "No," I return.

"I won't say *lost* them exactly" . . . this is breaking it to her gently—"but I"—here I allow gleams of hope to play over my countenance as I try different pockets ; gleams becoming less vivid, and I experience a blank which seems, somehow, suddenly, to wipe out the past, and leave me hopeless for the future. This is after the Last Pocket.

Happy Thought.—Perhaps a hole in pocket and got into Lining. Gleams of Hope again. We both brighten up. We see, so to speak, a hole in my pocket through which to creep out of our difficulty. . . . No. No Hole. The Sun of Hope sets, and we (my Aunt and myself) are enveloped in the dark night of despair.

"What I shall do I don't know," says my Aunt, "for they were all patent springs that you can't open without a particular sort of key that's only made in one place, and I don't know where that is, and better than any of the Lockmar Brah's that they used to talk so much about ; I mean, you know, those that they used to offer a hundred pounds to anyone to open with any key at all, and they never would—and . . ." gasp, then she continues—"I haven't got anything in the conservation book about open locking breaks and dialogue with a Blackian Belgesmith." (Dixon's Johnsonary in full force, my Aunt being excited, and having an audience among whom, as the reporters say, "we notice Mr. and Mrs. Milburd, Mister and Miss Northern Farmer, the Steward, the Under Steward, &c., &c." Of course she means that in her "conversation book" there is nothing about breaking open locks, nor is there any dialogue with a Belgian Blacksmith.)

The *Baron* is on the point of starting. The only thought that occurs to me at this moment, is, that *quay* and *key* have the same pronunciation, and that, on commencing a steamboat voyage, it is usual to leave the *quays* behind you. Half a mind to say it. Half a mind not to. It might be put down to the philosophy of taking things easily, or it might be put down to heartlessness, as it's my Aunt's keys, not mine, that are lost, and I've lost them.

Happy Thought.—When in doubt hold your tongue.

"Anybody here," shouts a stentorian voice, the property of an official, "of the name of Bascoe?"

As a rule (I don't know why, but must consider it in *Typ.*

Devel. under P. *Publicity*), no one likes to acknowledge his name when called upon in this way. It seems to suggest detectives, suspicion, bank robbery, flying the country under the name of Smith, and then it occurs to me that, on admitting that one's name *is* Bascoe (it's my Aunt's name, not mine, but I have to answer for *her*), there's a chance of a policeman stepping forward, and saying, "Then, Bascoe," (without the "Mister") "you must come along o' me." Of course it would be all a mistake, but no one would believe my explanation, and the real Bascoe (whoever he was), having kept silence, would escape.

"*Is* there," repeats the stentorian voice, almost imploringly, "*Is* there anyone here, name o' Bascoe?"

All eyes seem directed towards us, as much as to say, "Come, you know they mean you two. Give yourselves up. Don't let the whole ship be stopped because you *won't* answer. Come—out with it! We're not going to sea with a Jonah."

Milburd forces our hand, so to speak, by saying to me, "Now then, you'd better own it at once. You'll get off with seven years; and, after all, what's that!"

I smile and laugh. If I don't do this, the passengers will imagine that I really am a criminal, who refuses, very naturally *as* a criminal, to give himself up. My Aunt whispers hurriedly, "It's Cuxoms." [This is subsequently explained. She meant,—only being excited she got it all into a word, "It's the Customs about the boxes," her impression being that the official thought we were sneaking off without having had our luggage searched.]

I acknowledge, defiantly, that "my Aunt's—that is" (I feel very warm, and ready if necessary to resist with violence)—"That is—that we answer to the name of Bascoe." [Reminds me of the Advertisement for stray Terrier Dog—Lost—answers to the name of Bascoe, &c.]

"This way, then, Sir," returns the official, sharply.

Uncommonly like what I expected.

Happy Thought.—Turn it off. Say smilingly, "Very mysterious," so as to anticipate Milburd, who I feel sure, will "improve the occasion" in my absence. My Aunt and I ascend cabin-steps.

"Hallo!" says a voice we recognise with a pleasurable sense of relief, "just caught Mister Steamboat. Found Colonel Bunch-of-keys in my pocket just now. Couldn't wire, 'cos it's not good enough for Mr. Sunday."

He means that there is no telegraphing on Sunday. This I explain to my Aunt, who immediately replies that she perfectly understands Mr. Axworth. [*She means Englemore—But as we're starting in two minutes, why not, Axworth?*] My Aunt makes this reply somewhat tartly.

Happy Thought.—"Tartly" is the word. But how did tartly come by its signification. A Tart is a sweet—no, on second thoughts a Tart always wants sugar. [*Complication of Adjectives and Nouns.* Ch. xiv. Book 6, *Typ. Devel.*]

"So," continues Englemore, "In two twos my name's Mister Hansom to follow. Thought you'd be in a deuce of a way when you found yourself far away from your native land, and couldn't get at Tommy Toothbrush, or Neddy Nightgown."

My Aunt gravely admits that the fact of these two celebrities being untegetable ("un-get-at-able" according to Dixon's Johnson-ary) was causing her a great deal of anxiety.

"All for shore!" shouts Somebody Else with a voice (very fine voices about here), a bell rings, and a third of the people, who up to this time I had taken for passengers, suddenly appear as if, being panic-stricken by some unexpected and startling intelligence (as for example "There's a leak!" or "she must sink after the first two miles!" or "Safe to blow up before she gets to Greenwich!"), they are rushing from the ship.

"Good-bye!" says Englemore. "Wish you a merry Tripmas and a happy New There. Love to the little Buoy at the Nore. By the way——"

"Now, Sir!" says a nautical official to him, for Englemore is actually detaining the *Baron*.

"All right, don't wait for me," says Englemore, and then to me, seriously but hurriedly, with one hand on the gang-way rail, "Let me see—I was going to say—something of the greatest importance,"—and he has forgotten it—no, he remembers it—"I saw P. He says Yes, Good, But when?" They are beginning to move the

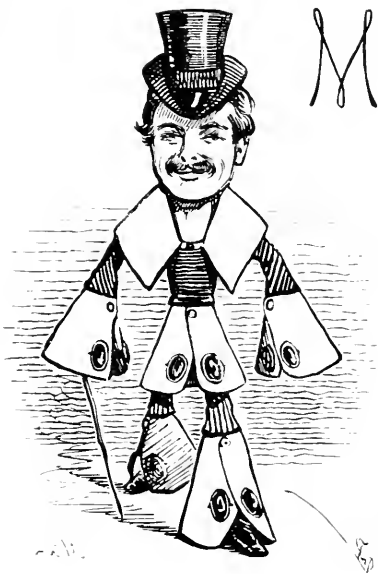
gangway. The bell sounds violently. We are in motion. Englemore dashes across the gangway. Safe on the quay, he calls out, "Wire on arrival. Say when I can have five minutes with you. Don't forget Colonel Sideboard."

We are moving slowly off. "Mister Dinner Service too, if you see him," he shouts, as a last reminder. I nod, and wave my hand. We are slowly drifting away, and steam-power commencing. Englemore has evidently remembered something very important at the last moment. He shouts, "I quite forgot to . . ." *Baron Osy's* engines render the remainder of this inaudible, but he is evidently continuing. I shake my head and put my hand to my ear, implying that I can't hear a word he's saying. The steam is quiet for a second, and I just catch his last words, "Write . . . or . . . *wire*," and we are fairly started.



CHAPTER VIII

ABOARD THE BARON—MY AUNT ABOARD—MRS. MILBURD—DIXON IN
FORCE—NORTHERN FARMER—CAPTAIN—THE GRINNER—CONVER-
SATION—NOTIONS—DINNER.



ANY ladies disappear at once. My Aunt does this immediately, and has got hold of the Stewardess in a corner. My Aunt's general notion of steamboat travelling is, either that you must go to bed at once, directly you get on board, or never. That, in fact, once on deck, always on deck, or, once in bed, always in bed. Milburd, who has made great friends with my Aunt in five minutes, prevails upon her, as the river is beautifully calm and the day warm, to come on deck ; and, as he puts it, "keep company with his Missus."

He means sit with his wife, to whom we have been introduced. "I shall never be able to go down again, I'm sure," my Aunt says, seating herself with her face to the wind, as if to be kept fresh by the breeze. Mrs. Milburd is, as my Aunt describes her afterwards, "a plumping little charm"—meaning a charming little plump person. "Very pretty, with dimpley lovels—I should say"—she corrects herself with a look at me, as much as to imply that she is perfectly aware of her mistake, and doesn't require *my* assistance—"Very pretty, with lovely dimples in her hands, beautiful teeth, and I am sure, though I

don't often admire people, she has the laughiest pretty possible." ("Prettiest laugh," of course. *Vide* Dixon's Johnsonary.) I admit all the praise, and only regret that his wife encourages Milburd's nonsense by laughing at him. I thought marriage would have sobered him. It hasn't a bit. On the contrary he's now got an audience which he can "command," and invariably "carry with him." My Aunt asks Mrs. Milburd, by way of commencing an appropriate subject, if she's a good sailor. Milburd, who generally replies for her if he can, says that "His Missus has been priming herself for the voyage for three days beforehand, and that the amount of chops and stout, and——" here she stops him laughingly, and owns to *not* being a good sailor. Then my Aunt tells her what a very bad sailor *she* is; and *how* it comes about that she is so; and under what circumstances she is worse at some times than at others.

Happy Thought.—Join in it, and tell them what a bad sailor *I* am. Better to prepare them, because if one isn't ill after all, you get a reputation for being a capital sailor, for modesty in not boasting of it, and for sympathy with the sufferings of others. At this point Milburd (at whom his wife laughs, admiringly, directly he opens his mouth) suggests various remedies; among others, that (of course) of staying on shore, and finally of keeping your head under water, in a pail, for twenty minutes. My Aunt tells me apart that Mr. Milburd is really *very* funny. "He reminds me," she says, "of a Mr.—dear me, what *was* his name? He propertied it for change some time afterwards, and went to France. Oh yes, of course, Jones—Mr. Jones. He was very droll, but I'm not quite sure that I don't prefer Mr. Ackworth," (she means Milburd) "Mr. Ackworth's fun to Mr. Jokes's jones after all." (Jokes's jones, *i.e.*, Jones's jokes. *Vide* Dixon's Johnsonary.)

Happy Thought.—Get out of hearing of this conversation. Why can't people, on board a steamboat, find some other subject besides sea-sickness? It's just exactly the place where they oughtn't to talk about it. Go and converse with the Captain. The Northern Farmer is with him. He is asking, "Does he (the Captain) think it'll be a bad night." The Captain doesn't. On the contrary, a very good night. It's a stupid question, because even if the Captain does think it'll be a bad night, one can't go back now.

I notice a man, or rather a man notices me, as I am attracted towards him by his perpetual grin. Whenever he sees me [and he sees me every three minutes regularly, because he is walking up and down the deck and grinning whenever he catches my eye as he passes me] this grin seems to say "I know *you*. I recollect your doing something or other, in past years, that *I* shan't forget in a hurry." I *think* I remember his face. But not his grin.

Happy Thought.—Now find out who he is. Process. I'll speak to the Captain: *he'll* speak to the Captain: common subject of conversation: then I'll speak to *him*: *he'll* speak to *me*. Then I'll say to him, "I fancy I recollect your face at——" and leave him to fill in the blank.

Mister Grinner asks the Captain, gruffly, "When shall we be at Antwerp?"

I set him down at once as a rude, unpolished man. He has not been a quarter of an hour on the *Osy*, and he walks up to the Captain, who is, as it were, by an agreeable fiction, his host, for the time, and asks, "When shall we be at Antwerp?" which really means, "Look here, I'm tired of this: why don't you get on and go faster? When shall we be off this ship, and get rid of *you*, eh?"

Happy Thought.—Soften it down. The Captain is a foreigner, and peculiarly courteous, so I feel that I should like to show him that the Grinner, as a boor, is an exceptional Englishman. Say jocularly, "O, we shan't be at Antwerp till seven or eight to-morrow morning—and," heartily, for the sake of the Captain, "I'm glad of it, for a pleasanter way of spending a good many hours"—being uncertain as to the number of hours the ship is advertised to perform the voyage in, I don't like to make my inuendo (still on account of the Captain) as to what time we ought to take, so merely say "a good many hours"—"than on board a fine ship (compliment to the Captain) on a lovely day, I don't know." The Grinner simply grins broader than before at me, as if the recollection of the circumstances in which he'd seen me in days gone by, was too much for him, and, shoving his hands into his overcoat pockets, he resumes his marching up and down without another word. Most irritating.

The Captain, who, by the way, has informed the Grinner that by seven A.M. we shall be at Antwerp, is now occupied in looking through an opera-glass.

Happy Thought.—To talk to him on general subjects. Why not talk to a Captain on general subjects? Why be professional with a Professional? You don't always talk about teeth to a Dentist. Evidently it would be bad taste. By this rule, *i.e.*, of never talking professionally with a professional, one would become deeply interested in Agriculture when talking to a Naval Captain, about the Ballet with a Bishop, and about Shipping with a Soldier.

Happy Thought.—Sink the shop. In this case, sink the ship. Wonder whether, when on shore, he's fond of farming. Perhaps so; "In his cottage near the sea." Might get something out of him about Peter Pigg and Tommy Turnips.

To lead up to the subject by asking him how he gets his vegetables on board, or, if he's fond of the sea. The latter seems, considering his position, a little rude, so I am prepared to substitute, "I suppose you stop on shore a good deal?" which, on consideration, appears to be ruder than the other. Why not plunge in at once, and say, "Well, skipper, how about Turnips?"

I open the conversation with, "Aren't you rather tired of going this voyage every week?" He regards me for one second, and then, resuming his opera-glasses, replies simply, that he is *not* rather tired of it, and turns to speak, in Flemish, I fancy, to the Lieutenant. Now I want a question to follow. Several people come up to talk to the Captain. There seems to be a sort of idea, prevalent amongst all the steamboat-passengers, that if you make friends with the Captain, it (whatever it is) will be all right. There are some men who always know the Proprietors of Hotels, the Drivers of Coaches, and the Captains of Ships, and pride themselves on the knowledge. I don't remark that they get better treated than anybody else. Milburd, for instance, always knows every one, or says he does. "Been talking to the First Officer?" he asks me. I reply "No, to the Captain."—"Well," he answers, "he *is* the First Officer."

Happy Thought.—Lucky I didn't address him as the Skipper.

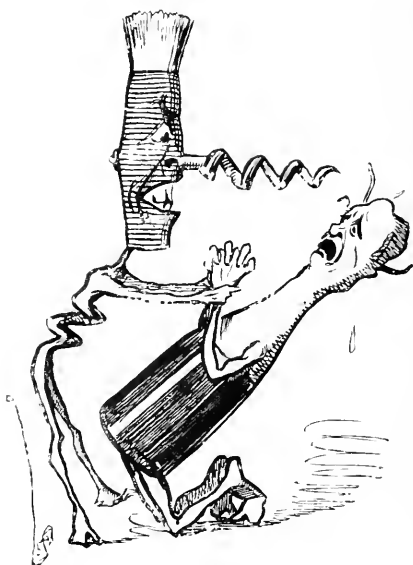
Questions which everyone asks the Captain :—

1. What time shall we arrive at Antwerp? (Answer uncertain.)

2. Does he (the Captain) think we shall have a calm passage? (Answer dependent upon whether before or after dinner or supper.)

3. When shall we be at sea? Also when do we dine? A matter of the deepest importance to those about to dine. The latter question was put most earnestly by my Aunt. On the answer being given, the questioner refers to his watch.

[*Happy Thought.*—Dine at two. Not at sea till eight. Questioner decides to dine and dine well.]



CHAPTER IX.

STEWARD—CHANGE OF COSTUME—ENGINES—BOILERS—FUNNY MAN—
DANGEROUS PROXIMITY—LORD MAYOR'S FOOL—THE JOHNSONARY
AGAIN.



THE Steward now comes round to ask who'll dine. I notice that a Steward is always on excellent terms with a Captain, and a Captain with the Steward. On consideration I see that a Captain can pretty well ruin a Steward, and a Steward can make a Captain very uncomfortable. If the Steward profits by the number of people who sit down to dinner and tea in the cabin, the Captain has only got to say that he is sure it'll be a bad passage, and hardly any one will either dine or sup. Certainly not sup. If the Captain, maliciously, did this, then

the Steward would, spitefully, give him lukewarm dinners, tough meat, bad fish, sour wine, and watered grog. So the management of a well-regulated family vessel reduces itself to—*Happy Thought*

(*by the Captain*).—Be polite to the Steward, and tell everyone that it's sure to be a fine passage.

Happy Thought (by the Steward).—Be very civil to the Captain. Reserve tit-bits, and private store of grog.

More Questions invariably put to the Captain by Passengers:—

Has he (the Captain) had bad weather lately, or good? Have there been many passengers? Will there be many passengers?

At what time shall we be in the Scheldt?

(*This is a question by a sociable person.*) Will he (the Captain) take anything? if so, what?

People are now beginning to appear in all sorts of caps and easy hats, and are trying to look, generally, as unlike themselves on shore as possible. We are ceasing to be strangers to one another, and feel a growing desire to be politely inquiring, civilly communicative, and, later on, specially if it's a fine night, quite confidential.

The Northern Farmer is explaining the river to his daughter. Other people are retailing "what the Captain says" to those who didn't hear him. Milburd inquires, "Does the Pilot come on board at Gravesend?"

I understand, from the Captain's answer, that he does.

Happy Thought.—Do more softening down with the Captain, because Milburd's manner is really calculated to convey the idea that *he* knows more of steamboat management than the Captain. I say, sympathetically, "Yours is a very arduous and responsible position, Captain."

Milburd cuts in with, "Well, I think you've an uncommonly jolly berth of it. There and back, twice a week, board and lodging. You get a pilot for the Thames—he's responsible for *that*; you get another for the sea—he's responsible for *that*; and another beggar comes on at the mouth of the Scheldt, and he's responsible for you up to Antwerp. I don't see what they want a First Officer at all for?"

The Captain smiles. Milburd continues, in an off-hand manner, "By the way, I've just been down in the engine-room, talking to the old boy there, and I see you don't use Mervyn's Patent. That's odd, eh?"

The Captain shrugs his shoulders indifferently, and presently says that this patent has been superseded. "By what?" asks Milburd, really inquisitorially. "By Benker's Double-Action," replies the Captain, decidedly. Milburn turns to me, pooh-poohing the use of Benker's Patent. "Why," he says to *me*, as if I was the referee who had to decide between Mervyn's Patent and Benker's Double-Action, "that was dropped years ago. You can't," still explaining to me, and *at* the Captain, which I don't like, "use the same leverage, nor work at anything like the same rate. I suppose," he says, in a tone of cross-examination, most irritating, it must be, to a man on his own vessel, "you don't do four hundred and twenty in the hour?"

The Captain laughs. "Four hundred and twenty?" he repeats. "More like six hundred and thirty." Milburd being evidently unprepared for this, is staggered, and for the moment silent.

Happy Thought.—Glad of it. "What on earth should *you* know of engineering?" I say to him, just to expose him before the Captain.

"Why," he answers, "I *ought* to, considering I was at Buste and Byler's studying engineering for two years." O! indeed, I was not aware of this. Milburd now wants to know whether the Captain uses the cylindrical expander movement? No, the Company has not adopted it. "Good Heavens!" says Milburd, turning to me again as judicial referee, "it's a perfect wonder the boiler hasn't burst over and over again." He goes on to explain to me that with or without the invention (I don't know which) you can't ease off at half the pace. This the Captain denies. He says, "See my men ease off in one minute."

Milburd doubts it, and smiles incredulously towards me. I wish he wouldn't, as it must make the Captain think that *I've* been prompting him to ask all this on my account. The Captain, in consequence, begins to eye me askance. A Bell.

Happy Thought.—Mister Dinner.

At Dinner.—My Aunt next to the Milburds. Don't like sitting too near a funny man, because it is as nervous work as holding a Roman candle, or a squib, when you never can tell how soon the pop's coming, and whether it won't hurt you considerably when it

does come. There's only one thing perfectly certain, that the audience will be amused, and the firework will be immensely pleased with himself, and will consider himself the most brilliant thing of the sort ever seen. A quiet and reserved manner, and an evinced desire to speak seriously on weighty topics, are no defence against the onslaughts of a Funny Man and Practical Joker. The two descriptions, by the way, sound like the advertisement of a new sort of business, "Licensed Funny Man and General Practical Joker." It really is a pity that the official Court Jester and Lord Mayor's Fool should have been abolished. There would be at once the utilisation of jocosity. Of course in these days, following the fashion of the times, the appointment to such an office would not be by private patronage and interest, but by public competitive examination.

Happy Thought.—Have the Examination Day every First of April.

Foolery would then be a study. The Fool of the Family would stand a fair chance of a good berth. Great noblemen used to keep private fools as well as private secretaries. The offices were gradually merged into one.

Happy Thought.—Reserve this idea for a sarcastic repartee to come down on Milburd heavily when he's making a joke at my expense. Shall say to him before company, "It's a pity the office of Lord Mayor's Fool is abolished, as you would have filled the situation admirably, Milburd."

I don't see (at present) what reply he could make to this. But, won't his wife hate me for it? Won't the people about say "it was rather rude"? Wouldn't it be better to put up with Milburd patiently rather than put him down forcibly? If this sarcasm about the Lord Mayor's Fool won't settle him nothing ever will, and I should never have the chance again. The highest praise that Milburd can give one is, after he's been peculiarly what he calls funny, and what *I* call rude, to slap you on the back and say, good-humouredly, "You don't mind chaff, do you, old fellow?" when you at once feel that it's childish to admit that you do not only mind but detest it, and that you are now writhing mentally from his dosing you with it. He will say before several

persons, alluding to me, that "he likes a fellow who can take a joke good-naturedly like *you* can, old boy." Then he gives you a dig in the ribs which positively hurts, and you must either laugh or kick him. I should like to do the latter—so I believe would many others—but we only smile.

Happy Thought.—Keep out of his way. I beg my Aunt, *sotto voce*, not to encourage Milburd, as she is really doing nothing now but listening to his nonsense and laughing. "Well, my dear," she answers, a little nettled, "he's very amusing, and you know that there are in society witty people who are considered as liverpridged persons," (Dixon's Johnsonary for "privileged persons"). Here she gets hurried, and lets all she has to say come out with a rush. "Why, I perfectly recomember my father telling me how he had heard stories about such people as Silly Cobber and Hookadore Theer—and—and—" gasp, and sudden finish—"they were always saying eizzywittums." (This, translated by Dixon's Johnsonary, means, "I recollect my father, &c. how he remembered, &c., Colley Cibber and Theodore Hook, &c.," and "witticisms.")



CHAPTER X.

FARMING ON BOARD — PICKING UP — PUTTING DOWN — HAPPY
THOUGHTS — SALMON — PUZZLES — CHRISTCHURCH — NEW FOREST
SALMON — BAGS — SPORTSMAN'S DIARY — TO CORN — AND CROPS —
INVITATION — NORTHERN FARMER — DREAM OF FUTURE — SUR-
PRISE — MORNING — A CARD — AWAKING.



THE Northern Farmer opposite me at dinner. Now's the time to lead up to farming, and find out something more about what Englemore calls "Mister Turnips." Somehow the conversation becoming unmanageable, turns on "paper." Northern Farmer knows all about it. He says they make paper of grass now.

Happy Thought. — Set up a County Paper, offices, machinery, and all complete, in a Grass County.

Conversation, becoming more unmanageable than before, darts about the table like a ball in a Racquet Court, and is caught and sent forward and sent back, and hit on the rebound, and then dropped; when some one brings up a fresh ball, and on we go again. Suddenly, *à propos* of the second course, the Northern Farmer, in the midst of a lull, asks me loudly, and so pointedly as almost to make me blush, I can't in the least tell why, "What Salmon do you get in London?"

I don't think I've ever been so much discomposed and startled by a question as by this. What Salmon *do* I get in London?

[On subsequent analysis I come to the conclusion that I was taken by surprise, and lost my presence of mind, because—*First*. I didn't expect a Farmer to be interested in fish. *Secondly*. The subject previously, up to that fifteen seconds of silence, had not been fish or anything like it. *Thirdly*. The question presumed that my residence was in London, and I should have had to explain, publicly, that it wasn't. *Fourthly*. That his way of saying "you—in London" sounded insulting, as if he took me by my dress and style for a genuine Cockney. *Fifthly*. I have never personally got (*i.e.* bought) Salmon in London.]

Happy Thought—(*on recovering my self-possession*).—"To reply, "O, Groves's, Bond Street," which I feel is an evasion.

My Aunt, who *has* got Salmon in London, replies, on her own account, "Savern Semmon—I mean Severn Salmon." Of course, Salmon from the Severn; quite a familiar name now I hear it, but very odd that it wouldn't come when called for by the Northern Farmer. "O," says the latter, as rather surprised, "not Christchurch Salmon?"

Happy Thought.—Reply with certainty, "No, not Christchurch Salmon." Feel quite at home now. Remember Christchurch described as a lovely place. Turn the conversation by saying, "A lovely place—Christchurch," and everybody appears to be listening for a description of it from me. Milburd, across my Aunt, asks, "Ever been there?" It occurs to me suddenly that I have seen it as a station on the South-Western. Till now I thought of it only as a college at Oxford, but I had never heard of its being specially famous for salmon.

Happy Thought.—To reply, "Yes—that is—I've passed through it." Better drop the subject.

Milburd asks if it isn't in the New Forest. I leave this for some one else to answer. On second thoughts, how about Salmon in a Forest? The Northern Farmer has been joking, perhaps, and playing into Milburd's hands. If there are Salmon in a Forest, then a Sportsman's Diary in the New Forest would be interesting, specially if kept by Englemore—thus:—

August 12th.—Two guns. Bagged four brace of Colonel Cock Salmon. Winged Mister Mackerel. Major Sprats rather wild; couldn't get near 'em.

August 13th.—Two barrels. Potted Shrimps. Peppered little Tommy Lobster just as he was going to earth. Came on a fine covey of Red Herrings. Bagged five brace. Kicked up Mister Crab, and let him have it hot.

And so on.

While I have been helping myself to potatoes, the conversation has turned on horses, then to artists who paint horses. Well-informed man, the Northern Farmer. Knows all about sheep and animals generally. Also about sheep and animal painters. Milburd asks if "he's seen Potter's Bull in Holland?" "Meaning Paul Potter's? Yes he has," he answers, which has the effect of taking Milburd down a bit. Northern Farmer now speaks of a farm (his own, I suppose) at Kendal. By easy steps we get on to corn, hay, and oats.

Happy Thought.—Farmer's Scientific Catechism. Elementary Questions, "What is Corn? What is Hay? What are Oats?" &c. Perhaps this plan is pursued at an Agricultural College. It strikes me for the first time that if I want to go in for this sort of thing regularly, and not only *pour me distraire*, I ought to enter at an Agricultural College.

Happy Thought.—To find out all about it. Will write to Englemore and ask him to inquire for me while he's in the country. Englemore will probably write back to say that there are lectures by Professor Parsnip and Doctor Carrots. Instead of a "Bachelor" as a degree, it must be a "Husbandman." The academical dress would be, I suppose, Gowns and Gaiters. To be "ploughed for smalls" would be praise instead of expressing a failure. Think it out, and resume subsequently. Write to Englemore.

After Dinner.—Still at table. Northern Farmer, becoming hearty (*he calls it "arty"*), says in a broad dialect, that if I'm coming his way he'd be glad to see me. Certainly.

Happy Thought.—Get to dates. When? Song, "*Would you but name the Day.*" He'll be home again in a month from now. Good. I'll tell him plainly and openly *why* I want to "cultivate" (agricultural term) him. I inform him that I consider him a professor. [By the way, his daughter is sitting by his side all the time, smiling, but silent. Pretty.] "No, no," he says, "not a professor."

"Yours," I insist upon it—meaning by "yours" "your occupation,"—"yours is a Profession, not a business, or a trade. In fact," I say, "there's science and art in it." I confide to him that "I intend learning his profession," meaning farming, only I don't name it, as I take for granted he understands me, which he evidently does, as he replies that he doesn't suppose I'd care much about it. As he is going to Brussels with his daughter, where she will be at school for some time, we shall not see one another after Antwerp; therefore, while we think of it, if he'd give me his card, or write his address, I would do myself the pleasure, &c., &c., when I come to the North, &c., &c., which I certainly shall, as I intend "going in for the thing regularly;" the thing meaning, as before, farming.

*Happy Thought (while he is looking in his pocket-book for card).—*Imagine his address—it will be "Sunnyside Farm"—"Rosedale Dairy"—Homely wife—buxom maidservants—well-educated daughter—honeysuckles—cows—new milk—up with the lark—down with the plough—home to oat-meal porridge—practical work in fields—top-dressings, &c., &c. I see it all in my mind's eye.

He can't find the card now, but will look in his bag. During the evening I talk on the subject with Milburd, who, however, retires early.

Happy Thought.—Perfectly calm. Go to bed. My Aunt says she feels quite well, she thinks, but a little feverish, and Mr. Milburd has told her that the best thing to take is a sodler of tummy and brander; "or," as the Steward is passing she addresses him hastily, "will you be good enough to bring me a wice of glassed water, if you please." [Translation, *per* Dixon's Johnsonary—"A sodler," &c., a tumbler of brandy and soda; and "Will you bring me a wice," &c., a glass of iced water.]

* * * * *

Antwerp.—Morning. Having to attend to my Aunt, I don't see much of Northern Farmer. He is just leaving the boat as I hail him. "Ah!" he exclaims, hurriedly. "Good-bye, Sir. 'Ere's the card." The daughter smiles upon me as I reply, "Good-bye Sir. You shall hear from me, depend upon it."

I explain to my Aunt that this acquaintance will be useful to me, and I proceed to examine the card. It is

MR. PETER CHOPP,
UPHOLSTERER,
22, EAST TICKTON STREET,
MANCHESTER.

!!!

Clearly then I've been calling upholstery a Profession, and offering to learn the business, and go to him as an apprentice.

Happy Thought.—Chopp's gone to Brussels. We're off in the opposite direction.



CHAPTER XI.

ANTWERP—EN ROUTE—AUNT'S ANXIETIES—CONVERSATIONS—FANNY
LINDA—GLYMPHYS—RECOMEMBRANCES—MEDITATIONS — JOHN-
SONARY FRANÇAIS—MOMPISON'S BERTHA—GLOVES.



O MY Aunt, who has found a letter for her at the Hôtel St. Antoine, won't stop at Antwerp, because, as she tells me, Captain Quorresue (Dixon's John sonary, as before) has been to take lodgings for her at Aix, and will meet us at the Station to-day.

She is very sorry not to be able to stay here, as "I recollect," she says to me, "having seen, years ago, in a book

when I was a child—and they did give us some really good and instructive children's books then, such as Whatshisname's—you know—Tralliver's Givels, and that about the two boys—dear me, what was it?—O, I merember, of course it was Fortnum and Mason"—gasp, and sufficient pause for me to suggest,

"You mean Sandford and Merton, Aunt."

"Yes. I *said* Sandford and Merton, didn't I? At all events, you know what I meant. And it was there, because I remember to have seen pictures of the antiquities here, some churches and other buildings which existed long before those which in our

country came over with Collum the Winkerer." [Note for Dixon's J. "William the Conqueror."]

During the journey (*via* Maestricht to Aix-la-Chapelle) she is constantly asking me, "Now, are we in Beljany or in Gergium?" She insists upon inquiring of various railway officials at every Station, "Do we change here?" and is very much startled at the apparition of the Guard's face at the window while the train is in motion. For a minute, having heard of such things in some foreign countries, she fancies the train is in the hands of brigands, who are demanding "Your money or your life!" at all the carriage-windows.

She now produces a Conversation Book in several languages, which she sets to work to study. Suddenly she asks me if I "merember Miss Glymphyn—not Charlotte, who married, but Miss Ethel—and her sisters Finny and Landa?" No, I don't. Of course, I am aware she means Fanny and Linda, but I don't know them even by their own proper names. Somehow, I don't care about them. I have a sort of recollection of having met the Glymphyns a long time ago, and finding them three young ladies with a very decided opinion on everything. They didn't care about anything in particular, and rather disliked everybody. I remember telling their father, or uncle, a story which, up to that moment, I had always considered highly amusing, but which was received by them with such marked coldness and such surprised glances from one to the other, that, although their father, or uncle, smiled in feeble deprecation of my having ventured upon such a subject, I felt (I remember it as vividly as if it were only the day before yesterday) I should like to have been rolled up in a blanket and taken away out of the front-door. I at once relapsed into silence and mental cynicism. I debated with myself, after dinner, whether I should retire early, or stay till they liked me.

Happy Thought (on that occasion).—I remember the hideous fiend of a Bottle Imp, in the play of that name, saying to the trembling German maiden, "You must learn to love me." Same idea now. * * * Old Glymphyn, I remember now, detained me down-stairs with the wine, as if I should be all the better for keeping when I went up into the drawing-room, and then gave me a very strong cigar and some liqueur; and while we were engaged

on these, the servant entered to say that "Mrs. and the young ladies, as the gentlemen hadn't come up, had gone to bed." I can perfectly realise what their impression about me must have been next morning. I was added to their list of the Odious, and I'll be bound that that wretched old Glymphyn apologised for his own absence from the drawing-room by laying the entire blame on my shoulders, if he didn't absolutely receive the thanks of the ladies for delaying me from joining them up-stairs. So altogether (now I come to think of it) I do *not* care about the Glymphyns.

My Aunt looks up from her Conversation Book (in three languages) to inform me that the Glymphyns are very musical. "Linda," she says, "is really quite talented in that way, and I believe has studied under the best masters; one was a German who used to perform on two instruments, he played, if I remember, on the guano—I mean the guitar and the piano—equally well."

After a few minutes' further study of the three-language Conversation Book, my Aunt, who is beginning to show signs of fatigue, says that, "if I don't mind she'll take off her boots, as she's heard that to bootle without trats is so very foothening and sereshing;" and, before I've a word to say on the subject, they are off. So is her travelling hat as well.

Happy Thought.—We've a *coupé* all to ourselves.

If we hadn't, what would foreigners think? And if they expressed what they thought, and I understood them, wouldn't I be bound to quarrel with them? But to quarrel abroad is to be engaged, before you know where you are, in a duel.

Happy Thought.—Not to understand what they say.

Meditating upon the subject, it would sound well in England to hear that I'd been called out and *went*. That I'd fallen in a duel. Then would come the question in a Club smoking-room probably, "What did he fight about?" Then the question would be, "My dear fellow, what *do* men fight about? Some woman, I suppose." Then the well-informed man, who always knows all about it whatever it is, breaks in upon the conversation with, "You were talking about poor old——" then he'd call me by my Christian name (and I'm supposing myself dead, and buried in some retired Continental churchyard); "well," he'd go on, "poor old fellow, he was a stupid ass to go out and fight with a Prussian, all about his

Aunt, too!—I'll tell you how it was—” then he'd recount it in such a quaint style, bringing out all the humorous points in detail, that at last the funniest stock story of the Club-room would be, How Old So-and-So (myself) went out, and fought for his Aunt, and fell in a duel.

“I hope,” says my Aunt, presently, “that Captain Quortesfue has taken lodgings where they speak French or English, as I shall never be able to get on in German. French,” she says, with pride, “will do perfectly.”

Happy Thought.—My Aunt's French. *Parlez vous français*, (Dixon's French Johnsonary for Travellers.)

She is very much troubled too about the coinage. It flashes across her in the train while she is studying the tables at the end of *Bradshaw*, and in the Conversation Book. Bank-notes, she supposes, will go everywhere. I reply, “Yes, certainly; and go pretty quickly, too.”

At the next Station my Aunt startles me with an exclamation, and seizes her boots so energetically, that, at first, I imagine either that she is going to hurl them at the Guard's head, on its appearing for the sixth time at our window, or that we are at Aix sooner than we had expected. On my inquiring the reason for this preparation on her part, she only looks out of the window and telegraphs to some one (not with her boots, thank goodness, as she has now put them on) whom I can't see, calling out, “Here! we've one seat, if you're alone.” Then, drawing her head in, and turning to me, she says, “It's Mrs. Mompison.”

Happy Thought.—Bertha Mompison, the youngest, I *think*. I have not seen her for—well—let me see—a long time. When last we met at Boodels' little place by the seaside which he called *The Crook*, we—that is Bertha and myself—were rather together than not. It recurs to me now (while Mrs. M. is settling herself in our *coupé*, and she takes so much settling, that I wish these seats were divided into three arm-chairs) that Miss Bertha and I had a very pleasant drive together, after a pic-nic, in the autumn. That, somehow, we had lost our party at that pic-nic and were obliged to take the only remaining trap, which was a pony-chaise, left at the inn, without a servant. That, somehow [It always is

“somehow” in these cases, and explanation is impossible], I remember driving a good deal with the right hand, and not using the whip, being very careful not to tire the pony, and going very gently up-hill. But when we got back to Boodels’ little place, where all the party were at supper, it occurred to me——

Happy Thought.—To let Miss Bertha go in first and face it. She was perfectly equal to the occasion, and commenced by attacking them for deserting her. Then I came in—when I say “came” in, I mean, as far as I can recollect, that I rather sidled in—and sat down unobtrusively.

Happy Thought (on this memorable occasion).—Keep quiet at first. Also be excessively polite and pleasant to every one, not on any account sitting near Miss Bertha, * * * I remember all this perfectly * * * and I remember (during that Boodels’ week by the sea) somebody coming, suddenly, into the drawing-room where we were (Bertha and I again), and stupidly begging our pardon and going away, when Miss Bertha wouldn’t on any account hear of it, and intimated that she particularly wanted this Noodle’s opinion on a song, referring to another opinion, which I was supposed to have already given on the same subject; whereupon I looked as musical as possible, and said, “Yes, certainly,” and was very glad when the Noodle was despatched, as he soon was, to see if Mrs. Somebody or other was in the garden or the conservatory, or had gone down to the beach. * * * And also I remember how, at the breaking up of Boodels’ party, we told each other where we were likely to be the next week, and the week after that, and how we haven’t met again, or heard of one another (at least as far as I know), for a year or more. I venture, now, to inquire after Miss Bertha. Mrs. Mompison says she is at Aix, where she, Mrs. Mompison, is staying for the benefit of her health. As her family are unaware of her sudden return by this train, her daughters will not be at the Aix Station to meet her.

Happy Thought.—Glad of it. Shouldn’t like to meet Miss Bertha, after so long an absence, when I’m begrimed with dust, and my hands feel as if they had been washed in weak gum, and had then been brushed lightly over with road-dust and coal-dust mixed.

Happy Thought (in travelling always).—Old Gloves.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. MOMPISON — CONVERSATION — ROWENA — MYSTERY — INVISIBLE GIRL — ILLNESSES — TORTURES — AIX-LA-CHAPELLE — NOUS VOICI — APPEARANCE OF CAPTAIN FORTESCUE.



MRS. MOMPISON, now with us in our *coupé*, is a stout, elderly lady, rather squat in figure, as if she'd been kept in a low room in early life, so that what would have been her height had expanded itself into breadth ("for in Nature nothing is lost," *vide Typical Developments*, Vol. xviii., Art. 2, p. 6, under "N." Nature).

By the way, her youngest daughter, Bertha, if I remember rightly, is short. Will she, too, expand? and—ahem!—take after her mother?

Happy Thought (about Miss Bertha).—"Short and sweet."

In less than five minutes I find out that it only requires a simple question on any subject, to draw from her an explanation, in, apparently, several pages of close talking. She has a wonderful memory for the events of her early life, which seem to find their reproduction in later events happening to various people. If you say to Mrs. Mompison, "My watch is rather slow," "Ah!" she says at once, so sympathetically that it really makes

you like her at first, and encourage her to tell you something, "I remember when we were first married, Mr. Mompison—we used then to live in Russell Square—in those days, you know, Russell Square was considered quite the fashionable quarter, and we had a very nice house there, which your Aunt will recollect." Here she interests *her*; but though Mrs. Mompison is asthmatic, and obliged to pull up at the commas and semicolons, yet the rest is never sufficiently long to allow anyone else to cut in and start a fresh subject.

Happy Thought.—Epigrammatic description of Mrs. Mompison, short-breathed and long-winded.

She tells us a long story about a watch, given her at that time, and by which she's never been able to tell the correct time, though she's had it for nearly forty years; and this narrative includes several other anecdotes out of the direct line, and to be found in the bye-ways of Mrs. Mompison's history. Most of these lesser stories are about her daughter Rowena, whom I have never met.

[*Subsequent Note, introduced here.*—After meeting the Glymphyns, and others, who knew the Mompisons most intimately, I find that no one has seen Miss Rowena since she was a child, and that, of her, at that time, their recollection is imperfect. But there's nothing which Rowena, apparently, hasn't suffered, nothing she hasn't done, no place she hasn't visited, no failing to which she is not subject, no virtue which she does not practise, no accomplishment of which she does not know, at least, something; and there's no *jeu de mot*, however new, which Rowena, according to her mother, hasn't uttered, years ago, in another form. Most of Mrs. Mompison's longest stories—and they are none of them short ones—are hung upon "my daughter Rowena." If there's no positive opportunity for a history, we get Rowena in little social anecdotes. It is enough to observe, for example, in order to give yourself, or someone else, a chance of saying something, that "the interior of Mid Africa is a charming spot." If you're well posted up in the matter, and know that others are not, you foresee a brilliant discourse all to yourself—only you haven't counted upon Mrs. Mompison's Rowena. "Ah!" says Mrs. Mompison (she invariably commences with a mild sigh, as if your inquiry, or remark, had

awakened painful recollections, which is a *Happy Thought* on her part, as it gives her time to get together her materials and her breath for the effort, and then her plaintive tone and looks deprecate all interruption which might appear rude and unseemly) "Ah!" she says, "it must be very beautiful. I don't know it myself" (here you see a chance for breaking in with what you do know about it, personally, only that she goes calmly on)—"but my daughter Rowena stayed with some friends, the Cloudies of Invernesshire, very rich people they were at one time, but David Clondie speculated in silk, or——well, I forget what—but he was obliged to economise and live abroad, and Rowena visited them in Africa, where she stopped at a place with a most extraordinary name." Here you are about to suggest a name, or *do* suggest it, but not another word will Mrs. Mompison let you get in before she's on again, with "Yes, I daresay that *was* it; because Rowena, when writing to me, and that's some years ago now," &c., &c. If you tell Mrs. Mompison that you've fallen down-stairs and dislocated your collar-bone, you are immediately informed that this is nothing new to Rowena. You've had the chicken-pox very badly, so has Rowena, far worse. Your sister has so exquisite a voice that she is thinking of really going on the Italian Operatic Stage: well, Rowena absolutely engaged herself, but Alboni begged her not to come out, until *she* had retired, and so Rowena gave in, and didn't. Have you an excellent memory? You may have, Mrs. Mompison admits, but nothing to Rowena's. Do you happen to possess so quick an ear for music that you can hum correctly a tune after only once hearing it? Mrs. Mompison quite believes you, because Rowena can play the airs of an entire Opera, or even an Oratorio, which she has only heard once for the first time the evening before. In fact, try what you will, Rowena beats you at everything.]

We are boxed up with Mrs. Mompison for an hour. In conversation, Mrs. Mompison first, my Aunt a very bad second, and myself nowhere.

Happy Thought.—Torture of the Middle Ages—to be jawed to death.

She *will* explain everything to us—her own complaints, Rowena's

complaints (who has had all my Aunt's sufferings multiplied, it seems by ten, and is far better on the whole than could have been possibly expected), Mr. Mompison's complaints, the remedies which don't succeed, the remedies which she hopes will succeed, and so on.

My Aunt asks if she has found the waters of Aix beneficial. Mrs. Mompison can't simply answer Yes or No, or tell us that she hasn't been there long enough to make up her mind on the subject; not a bit of it. She at once commences shaking her head sadly, and sighing as if all her family had been poisoned by the sulphur springs. "Ah!" she says, "I've tried them for some time, and I'm bound to say that, to a certain extent, and in certain cases, I've known them do perhaps some good, but not permanently, because Rowena," she turns to me, and I incline my head——

Happy Thought.—Be attentive and polite to Miss Bertha's mother.

——"Because," she continues, "my daughter Rowena went there for a fortnight, or two months—let me see, which was it?—in the spring or autumn; but it doesn't much matter, and she was suffering dreadfully at the time from pain in her neck, and from a sort of nervous depression of the larynx, I think, which prevented her from ever getting any sleep after six in the morning, so she always went to bed at nine, and took a nap in the afternoon; and as for her eating, Rowena used to say to me after breakfast, or luncheon, or dinner, that she never could understand what had become of her appetite."

My Aunt, getting a chance for herself, rushes in hurriedly on her own account, to tell Mrs. Mompison why *she* is going to Aix. "I'm going," she says, "to try the sulphur waters and nervanism for the galves, which I hear is the demery now for all complaints arising from debilical hysteria——" gasp, and here she becomes so hopelessly entangled in the meshes of Dixon's Johnsonary, that Mrs. Mompison, who has been taking in, carefully, a good supply of breath, enough for a five minutes' narrative without an interruption, at once seizes the opportunity, and says, "Ah! yes! that's what poor Rowena—my daughter Rowena—suffered from, fearfully. No one can know," this is a sort of home thrust at my

Aunt, "no one can know what that poor child went through." I feel, while she goes on talking, that I could tell her, if I liked, what I'd gone through with other illnesses, and, as it were, beaten Rowena all to nothing. I'm sure my Aunt is dying to back her complaints and sufferings against Rowena's.

Happy Thought (on the first opportunity).—To say, Well, we all ought to be very thankful that we haven't lost legs or arms. "I knew," I go on, "a poor fellow once," &c., then I tell them a piteous tale, by way of depreciating Rowena's sufferings, which almost brings tears to my own eyes, and a slight pause follows its termination.

Happy Thought.—Checkmate to Rowena.

Not a bit. Mrs. Mompison begins, "Ah! yes, that's very dreadful, very dreadful indeed, but it's almost worse where a young girl, full of life and health, as Rowena—my daughter Rowena—was when she was out hunting with Lord Diddlecot's hounds in Leicestershire—she was a beautiful rider, and led the field whenever she was out—and her horse, which her father had given her, and bought for three hundred guineas of Sir George Lamley—it was a trained hunter, and from some cause or another, it fell at a five-barred gate, and poor Rowena was thrown violently into the field, hitting her right arm and her left knee so badly that——"

Aix-la-Chapelle.—Tickets!

Happy Thought.—Good-bye for the present, Mrs. Mompison. "I daresay," says my Aunt, "we shall see something of you while we're here."

Note.—See something: limit the pleasure to seeing: and when seen, if possible to be avoided; except for the sake of Bertha Mompison, whom I—yes, certainly—whom I do wish to meet again.

At this moment up comes Captain Fortescue; and Aunt in a flurry calls him Mr. Tinberry on the spot. She doesn't remember his name until we've been with him five minutes, and then she makes ample amends by addressing him as Captain Quortescue, which nothing will convince her is not his correct designation.

CHAPTER XIII.

ENNUYÉ — FORTESCUE'S DISMAL — EXPLANATION — LODGINGS AT AACHEN—VIEWS—LANDLADY—MILBURD—CONVERSATION BOOK — TRYING TIME—HINTS FOR FRENCH SPEAKING—AN AGREEMENT—A DREAM—TREMENDOUS DISCOVERY—FIRST APPEARANCE OF A BONSER !



CAPTAIN FORTESCUE, who receives us at the Station, is weary of everything generally. He is a lively person to meet on one's arrival. "Wretchedly dull place, this," he informs my Aunt, making a wry face on saying this, as if he'd just swallowed a nasty dose. "Wretchedly dull. Nothing to do. I'm sick of it. 'Pon my soul, it's enough to give one a suicidal mania in a fortnight." Then, with a pitying air to us, "Going to stop here any time?"

I hasten to explain that I shall only remain to see my Aunt comfortably settled (of

which there is, according to Captain Fortescue's account, a cheerful prospect), and then I shall return home at once.

"Ah!" he returns, still pityingly, which is most irritating, "that's exactly what I used to say when I first came. I intended to stay ten days, and I've been here ten weeks." To my Aunt, "You'll go in for some regular course, I suppose?" She replies, rather nervously, "Yes, I believe I am ordered valnagism and——"

"Yes," interrupts Fortescue, smiling as placidly as a Lotos-eater, "they ordered *me* galvanism to pick me up, but they first knocked

me down. It's very provoking. I ought to be in England, at Moss-shire, now."

Happy Thought.—Then, my dear Captain Fortescue, why don't you go!

He smiles, compassionately. "My dear fellow, *you* won't talk so easily about going, after you've been here a week or so. I ought to have joined this week."

"Good gracious!" exclaims my Aunt, involuntarily frightened out of herself by this last expression of his, which she connects in her own mind, evidently, with some surgical operation, "You don't mean—that is—joined!—you haven't been——"

"No, no," he replies languidly, "not so bad as that. I meant joined my regiment."

"Dear!" says my Aunt, much relieved by this explanation. "I really thought you'd been obliged to sunbergo—I mean submit to some painful gersical soperation, and that it hadn't been menderly propered."

Captain Fortesque now takes us to see the lodgings which he has engaged conditionally. "They're not particularly bright," he admits (and they are not), "but they're in an excellent situation, near everything and everybody, if *that's* any advantage," he adds, with a gloomy and sarcastic smile. He informs us, in the same despairing tone, that "the lodgings are the same all over Aachen, and that these happen to be the cheapest he's seen."

I don't believe (from subsequent events) that he ever troubled himself until the morning of our arrival, and that then he simply lounged into the first place where he saw "Apartments" in the window, and took them conditionally upon our being satisfied when we came.

The sitting-room has an old piece of carpet, showing a foot's breadth of stained floor all round. There is a piece of furniture with a marble top to it, and one small drawer underneath. There is a venerable sofa, which my Aunt feels, she afterwards says, inclined to dust before sitting down on it. There is another wonderful piece of furniture, which looks like a cabinet piano of an ancient date, but *is* an *eseritoire* intended to make you say, "Dear me! a writing desk!" when you open it. In front there is a fairish view, to which we turn, as quite a relief, from the dingy

paper, the dull patchwork over the beds in the bedrooms (mine is a mere closet), and the generally depressing effect of everything in the lodging, and with our heads out of window, we say with affected cheerfulness, that we think this'll do ; and it turns out afterwards that we both mean, though out of politeness we don't say so, "We *do* wish Captain Quortesfue hadn't taken these lodgings, for of all the gloomy holes we were ever in, this is the worst."

Happy Thought.—Not going to stop at Aachen. Off the day after to-morrow, after my Aunt's settled.

Milburd, who is passing through, and has left his wife at the hotel, comes up-stairs to see "how we're getting on."

Fortescue says, languidly, "They've only been here an hour ; you can't expect them to have anything the matter with them, yet. Give 'em a day, poor things !" His view of visitors to Aix being that any healthy person visiting this sulphurous spot, knowingly, deserves all he gets, and, in his opinion, he'll probably get a good deal.

Always in a worn and languid manner, as if the world were coming to an end to-morrow, and nothing could make any difference to anybody, he wishes us good-bye for the present, as he sees that one of the young persons connected with the shop below (the landlady, he imagines), is coming up-stairs. ("She talks French," he says : "so that'll be all right"—will it?) He delicately hints that we should probably like to be alone with her, and so drags himself downstairs as if he'd just come out of a torture chamber, and would expire at the foot of the staircase.

Milburd doesn't offer to move. On the contrary, "Here's some fun," he exclaims ; and seizing upon the Conversation Book (wish I hadn't left it out ; it exposes a weak point) he says, "Now then, let's see where it is. Where's 'How to Hire a Lodging'—Dialogue with a Landlady. Here's a game !" I don't think my Aunt is best pleased with this levity, and, on the whole, it occurs to me that she is not best pleased with anything she's seen up to the present moment, Quortesfue included.

"I say !" says Milburd ; "you're over a milliner's shop. There'll be all the (what he calls) gals waiting on you. I say"—

Happy Thought (to myself).—Practise my German.

His further remarks are cut short by the entrance of a very quiet and lady-like young woman (one of the numerous "Young Persons" in the shop below, whom I now remember having overheard giggling at us behind the glass-door with a muslin blind over it), who salutes my Aunt, Milburd, and myself.

In what language shall I address her? Is this the one who speaks French, and with whom, therefore, "it will be all right?" Hate to talk in a foreign language before two English people, specially when one's an elderly relative who may correct you with authority, and the other's a practical joker, who will pick up every mistake you make, and will pretend to roar with laughing at your pronunciation, or your idioms, whatever you say.

We are all silent.

I feel that I could get on, if I was alone, well enough, and perhaps in about five minutes be complimented by Mademoiselle on my French; but before Milburd and my Aunt I can't find a word to say.

Happy Thought.—Let my Aunt begin, and see how *she* does it.

"You tell her," says my Aunt, impatiently, "that we'll take the rooms as Captain Quorterrage—I mean Captain Quortesfue arranged."

Milburd pretends to look this out in the Conversation Book, and informs me, as "something to go on with," that "Mademoiselle" is "Meess," that "sivvoo play" is "eef you ple-ase," and that "Plum-pud-dang" is the same in all languages. These instructions he finishes with "Go on Milor Rosbif, fire avays!"

Happy Thought.—Ignore him. Smile, deprecating tomfoolery.

Our landlady, the nice, quiet, modest young person (not at all Milburd's notion of "one of the *gals*"), is still waiting for me, or somebody, to speak first.

I say boldly, "*Le Capitaine Fortesque, vous connaissez ce Monsieur que je veux dire—*"

She replies, "*Parfaitement, Monsieur,*" which gives me time; and I continue.

"*Eh bien !*"

Happy Thought.—Always try to get in "*Eh bien,*" "*alors,*"

“*bien entendu*” and “*n'est-ce pas*,” whenever possible; because, if you can't command an entire language, it's a great thing to have a small effective force at your disposal for manœuvres.

Happy Thought.—Travelling proverb, “A little knowledge is a very useful thing.”

I continue, “*Eh bien alors!*”—(by the way, musn't waste my regiments recklessly)—“*si vous avez compris de Monsieur le Capitaine que nous allons prendre—*”

“That's rum French,” says Milburd, in an audible aside.

I beg him with, I am aware, a little irritation of manner, not to play the fool, adding, that if *she* understands me, that's sufficient, to which my Aunt assents, saying, “Of course! only *do* make her understand!” which rather upsets me, as I resume, abandoning my original sentence, and going to the point thus:—“*En bref*”—which I remember in several modern books—“*En bref, nous prendrons,—je veux dire* (with a glance at Milburd) *nous prenons, les appartements par la semaine, et on commence, maintenant, aujourd'hui. C'est bien entendu, n'est-ce pas?*”

She returns, quietly, “*Je vous comprends parfaitement, et je dirai à ma sœur aînée tout ce que vous m'avez dit. Bon jour, Madame! Bon jour, Messieurs!*” And she withdraws.

Happy Thought.—Why, being gone, I am a man again.

My Aunt is dissatisfied. “Why didn't I,” she wants to know, “ask about the price?” Milburd insists that I ought to have put all the questions in the Conversation Book. I answer my Aunt that Fortescue will tell us all about price when we meet him.

Milburd wishes me to come to dinner with him and Mrs. Milburd at a restaurant. While it is preparing, I show my Aunt the Cathedral and the Elisa Fountain. At every other step I am obliged to explain that it's not the drains, but the sulphur which she smells. I tell her that I recollect all about it, and after dinner she feels a little better.

Very tired, and retire early: after inspection—ahem!—and with considerable misgiving. I remark that the quiet young persons (the “gals”) below are still giggling. I can't see, but I

can hear shouts of laughter. Are they so pleased at our having taken the lodgings?

Notes of the Night, made soon after dawn.—My Dream. I seemed to be in some church which I knew thoroughly well, yet I'd never seen it before. Somebody, only showing half his body out from behind a pillar, said that High Mass was going on, and at that moment I saw the clergy in their vestments walking along, accompanied by a master of the ceremonies in a sort of gold chasuble and a tall black chimney-pot hat, which he wouldn't (somehow I felt this, for he didn't say so)—which he wouldn't take off on any account. Then, all at once, from out of a door in a wall, which seemed to have no connection with any part of the church, but was put up like a screen on the right, came a very long, thin monk in a surplice, who denounced every one, as I imagined from his action, though *he* never said anything, and yet he was certainly vociferating with all his might; and my Aunt who was standing up close to four people who were kneeling and somehow doing it by facing both ways at once, said to me crossly, "You don't mean to say you've brought me here for this!" Upon which I remonstrated with her, without speaking, however, which was the remarkable part of it, and the tall monk, waving his arm, disappeared through the door in the wall just as another priest in a black biretta began to pump the handle of the organ in the loft just above us, and to preach, at the same time, against Mary, Queen of Scots; and whenever he stuck for a word, a man in a grey dress prompted him. "And then," he said, "that scamp of a Scotchman!" whereupon I looked up, and he at once withdrew the expression, saying, distinctly, that he didn't mean me. This seemed to satisfy everyone (there were five people present); when, on looking up towards where the altar should have been, but wasn't, I saw another priest at least twenty feet high, who turned round, smiling and bowing (he'd a head exactly like that of the great Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator), and he was stooping down to lift up a little deacon who was facing us, and chuckling while he was giving us a blessing. Then the organ began to play—and I awoke.

Think I hear my Aunt stirring. So rise. Every one up and about in Aachen. Out to look at Water Drinkers. Same old

routine, same smell, almost same people. Pretty Miss Elisa, alas! has vanished from the fountain. I visit the kindly Miss Catherine (it isn't Catherine, but something very like it) and while laying in a small store of cigars (at one *gro* apiece, and a little one or two in on taking a quantity), I learn that poor Elisa will never more hand waters from this, or any other fountain, on earth. "She was a very pretty girl, and as good as she was pretty," says Miss Catherine, with an emphasis that implies a history, and I feel that nothing more can be said.

It relieves us both, after a pause, to interchange the tittle-tattle of the present season, and to discuss the merits of the newest fashion in cigar-holders.

"And where are you lodging?" asks Miss Catherine, who is only too pleased to advise and recommend.

Happy Thought.—Whenever going again, send to Miss C. Ought to have thought of this before.

I answer, oh, at Fräulein Frowster's.

"Ah! so!" says Miss Catherine, and smiles. I don't like that smile. She doesn't offer an opinion on the matter. I wish she would. Somebody else enters, and I leave.

I don't like the peculiar way in which she said that "So." I don't like her smiling and only saying, "So."

Back to lodgings. Gaily salute the Fräulein Frowster, whom I see in the shop. She bows to me civilly, and nicely enough.

I enter the sitting-room. My Aunt is there before me. A frown is on her brow. In her hand is the lid of, I fancy, a pomatum-pot. I wish her good morning. She does not return the courtesy, but asks me in a tone, at once grave and indignant, "Where is your German Poekshonary?"

What? Oh, of course, my Pocket German Dictionary. Here, naturally, in my pocket.

"Then," says my Aunt, holding out the pomatum-pot lid, on which I now notice, for the first time, a large round brownish black spot, as of the remains of a squashed insect; "then, if you please, tell me what is the German for—for—THAT?"

Further inspection unnecessary. Miss Catherine's ominous smile. Ah! I open the dictionary, and far on, under "B," I find it.

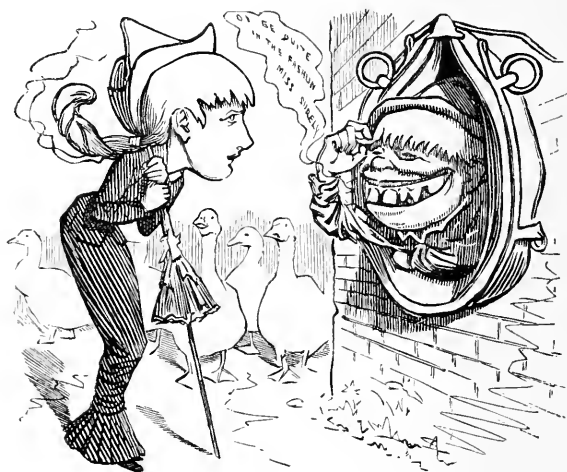
"What is it?" asks my Aunt, tragically.

[This is my pronunciation of the word in the Anglo-French-German Dictionary—"die Wanze—punaise."]

"Wanser," I reply.

"Then," she returns, with calm desperation, "I've killed five *Wansers* this morning. Here's one!" and she indicates the defunct on the pomatum-pot lid with the air of a Lady Macbeth, pointing at the "little damned spot." Then she adds, having already forgotten the word, "That's a *Bonser* if ever there was one."

She is right, *it is*.



CHAPTER XIV.

DIE WANZE—BONSER—PUNAISE — JOAN — SWARMS — RINGING UP —
 GRETCHEN — ZIMMERMÄDCHEN — — AUNT ROW — TEN LITTLE
 WANSERS—WO IST—A SONG—A MESSAGE—GERMAN PROGRESS
 —CASPAR TO THE RESCUE.



THEN, that," says my Aunt, reflectively, "is a Bonser."

I regret to say that, reading *Wanze* for *Bonser*, the fact admits no possibility of doubt. "Let me see," says my Aunt, still with an air of meditation over the lifeless body, "what is the French for *Wanser*?" She is evidently preparing to encounter them in all languages.

Happy Thought. — Never met with them in French. Up to this time I had always been under the impression that they were peculiar to English lodging-houses.

I refer to the Dictionary. "The German *Wanser*," I presently inform my Aunt,

"is, in French, *La Punaise*."

My Aunt is immensely astonished. "Why, goodness me!" she exclaims, "that's what they called *Joke of Arm*—wasn't it?"

"Called whom, Aunt?"

"Joan of Arc," she replies; "they always called her *Joan La Punaise*. Now what could be the reason of that?"

Happy Thought (admitting the supposition that she was so called).

—Because her name was a bug-bear to the English. I suggest that *La Pucelle* is what my Aunt means.

"Ah yes," she returns, instantly, "but it's easy to get such words mixed, for really *Pusaine* and *Punelle* are very much alike."

As regards this present specimen, I want to know if my Aunt thinks "there are many more where *that* came from?"

She simply answers "Swarms."

Happy Thought.—Look out "Swarm." Result, *Der Schwarm*.

"That's enough," my Aunt says. "Now ring the bell for the servant."

This process is a remarkably primitive one. There is on the table a small bell, which emits, on being shaken violently, a proportionately feeble tinkle. Regarded in the light of an amusement, it might beguile a spare five minutes; but for any such practical purpose as summoning a domestic from a depth of two flights of stairs, and through a thickness of two doors, it is perhaps a trifle ineffective.

On some office-doors I remember having seen a brass-plate with the instruction "Ring and enter" engraved on it. Ringing seemed as superfluous as in the present case, where the direction should be, "Ring, and then shout as loudly as you can for the servant." I ring to begin with, but what am I to shout? What is the servant's name?

Happy Thought.—Being in Germany, try Gretchen.

Subsequently, after experimentalising three times, alter it to "Marie!" Voice from below answers to this, and it is evident that a spirit has been summoned from the vasty—or in this instance, judging of the place from the appearance of the person—the nasty deep, and is coming when I do call.

"Give it her well," says my Aunt, "and say that we shall leave this afternoon."

"But we can't speak German to her," I object.

My Aunt is equal to the emergency. "Tell her, then," she says, "to send Miss Whatsername here—the Frauselle or the Madelein, or whatever they call the Young Person who keeps the house. Captain Quortesfue said that it was most likely she was a Belman and not a Gerjian, and only talked French, and I'm sure

her sister spoke very well yesterday. You'd better ring, or call again."

I do so. My Aunt is keeping her wrath up to boiling-point by looking daggers at the miserable Wanser, which she has nailed, as it were, to the pomatum-pot lid, like a bad penny to a counter.

Happy Thought (after calling again).—Look out the subject in Conversation Book. Retire with it into bedroom, and let my Aunt commence the attack.

The Zimmermädchen, however, appears sooner than I had expected. She is a slipsloppy maiden fresh from the boot polish or the black-lead, with which cheerful colour she has been smearing her face, perhaps with a sort of savage Indian's idea of frightening the enemy. The enemy being ourselves, the Lodgers. She is, as my Aunt afterwards says, exactly like that of a Flemish barmaid in any old picture of "boors drinking." "She is," she adds, "the perfect sick family of one of those figures." (It occurs to me afterwards, on referring for "sick family" to Dixon's Johnsonary, that my Aunt meant *fac simile*.) Her stockings are wrinkled all about her heels, which have, apparently, outgrown her slippers. She is altogether so much like an over-boiled pudding in a cloth, that she seems to be merely kept together by pins of prodigious strength, stuck in at those points of her dress which are most likely to yield to interior pressure. If one of these pins were to give way suddenly, the result would be too dreadful to contemplate.

Happy Thought.—Don't contemplate it.

As to her hair, it's done up with one twist behind like the small top of a cottage loaf. With her half silly, half cunning expression, she reminds my Aunt of the Goosted Tuff at the Zoological Gardens.

The Mädchen is evidently either an old performer in this Act of the Drama of the *Wanser*, or she is an imbecile. The former for choice. At first she pretends, much to my Aunt's disgust, not to be able to perceive the impounded insect; but incapable of sustaining this assumption of character for more than five minutes, she admits, in pantomime, that she can see it, and looking up into my Aunt's face with an ingeniously simple grin, she asks, quite with

the air of one profoundly desirous of being instructed by our superior wisdom, "*Was ist das?*"

"*Was ist das?*" retorts my Aunt, speaking excellent German in her imitative indignation. "You conknowsey well enough. *Das ist Wanaiser, Bonser!* And what's mair," she adds, warming with her subject, and finding that her mastery over the German language exceeds her fondest expectations, "*dere ist schwarms of deser Bonsers in mein zimmer.*"

Happy Thought.—To make the matter clearer to the Mädchen, who at present appears inclined to do nothing but grin, as much as to say, "Well, you are two funny people!" Annoying this: so I say, "*Ja, so, schwarms Wansers in mein Zimmer*" (I am obliged to say "*mein*," which is not true, as I don't recollect the German for the possessive "her," unless it's "*hern*," which I don't like to try), then on my fingers, "*Ein, Zwei, Drei*," and so on up to ten: meaning Wansers.

Happy Thought.—Recollect (while I am doing this) an absurd song about *Ten Little Niggers*, whose number was perpetually being reduced. Adapted in my mind to present occasion—*Ten Little Wansers*.

Ten little Wansers
In de Zimmer, mein,
One squashed on the pomatum-pot lid—
Then there were nine.
One little, two little, three little, four little, five little
Wanser B . . oys.
&c.

The Zimmermädchen is more amused than ever, though I don't sing her this verse, but on the contrary preserve an austere front. "*Ein, zwei, drei*," she repeats, and positively shakes her head with laughter, as much as to say, "O, go along with you do; you *are* so funny."

"Idiot," says my Aunt, highly irritated. "That's her artfulness. She knows, as well as possible, what we've been saying to her."

My Aunt's fixed belief, with regard to all foreigners, is that they all thoroughly understand you, but pretend not, just to annoy an

Englishman and give themselves time to think over their plan, whatever it may be.

"Don't tell me," she says, pettishly, "that they don't know what I'm saying. They *do*. That girl does. Pretending not to know a Bonser when she sees it! Bah! I wouldn't believe her on her oath. Tell her to go downstairs and send up someone who isn't quite such a fool, or such a knave."

This is difficult to render in German—I mean in *my* German.

Happy Thought.—To ask for the Landlady.

"*Vo ist die*"—so far I fancy I'm grammatical, though I am a little uncertain as to *die*—"Vo ist die"—I stick at "Landlady." I can only think of *Landwehr*. Mädchen grins. "Idiot!" my Aunt again mutters. I reconstruct my sentence with a new idea, "*Vo ist die, Fräulein Frowster?*"

In answer the Mädchen has a great deal to say to both of us, which, delivered with the utmost volubility, is of an apparently explanatory character. I fancy that she is giving a lecture on Wansers, containing arguments, based upon facts within her own experience, which are all favourable towards our not giving up the lodgings.

"They're all alike," says my Aunt, when the Mädchen pauses to take breath. "I know as well as possible what she's been saying, though I couldn't quite follow all she said."

Happy Thought.—To say generally, "I couldn't quite follow," when one really hasn't understood a single word.

My Aunt continues, "I'll be bound she's been saying that she's never seen anything of the sort in the lodgings before *we* came, and that if there are Bonsers here, we must have brought them ourselves. The idea of our going about swarmelling with travels of Bonsers, like the man with the Illustrious Fleas. Horrid!"

Does she really think the Maid has been saying this, I ask.

"Certainly," returns my Aunt; "that's what they'd say in England."

Happy Thought.—Patriotic Song, *What will they say in England?* Reply to this, by my Aunt, *That's what they'd say in England.*

"Do tell her," says my Aunt, impatiently, "to send Frowlein Froster here, and get rid of her."

Happy German Thought.—"Die Fräulein Frowster nach here kommen machen," by which I intend to convey "Make Miss Frowster come here."

"Ja, Herr," she answers. Exit, grinning.

"I wonder what she's going to say or do," my Aunt answers.

So do I. By the way, there's one difficulty that strikes me. It is, what is our legal position in Germany with regard to the Landlady and the lodgings?

Have we taken the rooms by the month, or week, or day, or what? Is it possible to take them for less than a month in Germany? What arrangement did Fortescue make? He never told us. If we go away on the first day, can they sue us for a month's rent? If sued, in what Court, and who is the best solicitor to go to? A German solicitor, who only speaks his own language, won't do. Suppose Fortescue, as our agent, to have made a contract for a month, do *Wansers* invalidate it? Then, if there is a lawsuit, isn't the practice in Germany regulated by the Court-Martial spirit, and isn't the loser, in addition to paying his loss, punished with imprisonment in a fortress? "A German might be," says my Aunt, "but not an English person who claimed protection under the Flattish Brig."

I suppose she's right (taking "Flattish Brig" to mean "British Flag"), but there seems to be a difficulty about it somewhere.

Happy Thought.—In answer to my Aunt's despairing "What can we do?" it suddenly occurs to me that my old and trusted friend Dr. Caspar will come and settle the matter, in his own language. I volunteer to go out and fetch him.

* * * * *

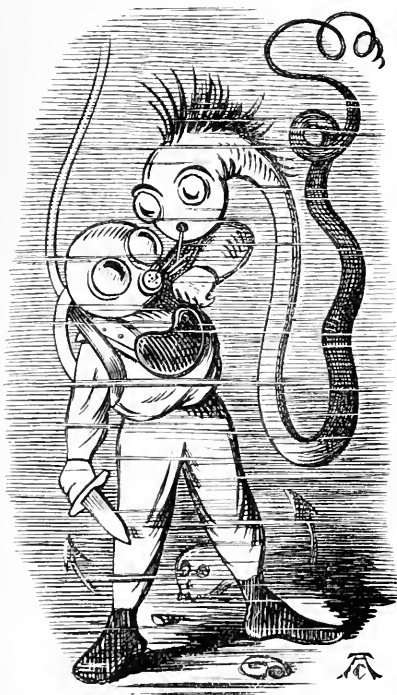
Caspar *has* settled it with a high hand, judging by his manner and tone.

The Young Person quailed before him, and the grinning Mädchen became dumb and glum. From Caspar's way of "giving it them," I can judge how a Prussian Officer could make requisitions when he wished to present the victims with a bit of his mind. My Aunt said afterwards "that she really felt for the unhappy people in the shop, and it was only by thinking of the

Bonsers that she could keep herself from begging Dr. Caspar not to scold them so severely."

We won't try any more lodgings, but move over to the Grand Monarque, to which hotel I wish we had gone on our arrival.

Note and advice to travellers.—Dr. Caspar, whether as a friend or a physician, is one of the kindest men in Aachen. His gouty subjects bless him. "May he live long and prosper," as Rip Van Winkle says.



CHAPTER XV.

HÔTEL DU GRAND MONARQUE—LOBSTER—GERMAN FARM IN VIEW—
RULES—GUIDE—LES ENTOMOLOGUES—LETTERS—PAPERS.



COMFORTABLY housed in Hotel.

"No Bonsers here," says my Aunt, who has not yet entirely recovered her serenity. "I thought they were in those lodgings when I first looked at the lobster in the bed."

Happy Thought. — Remember the game of words played with ivory letters. "Bolster" and "Lobster" composed of the same letters. New phrase of Dixon's Johnsonary.

Happy Thought. — What is the difference between a bolster and a lobster?—One you can sleep on, the other you can't. Put this down as a brusque saying of Abernethy's.

Happy Thought.—The beauty of going to a well-ordered hotel like Madame Dremel's Grand Monarque, is, that everybody appears to have expected you for the last month, and to have got everything ready for you, whatever it was. Within an hour, we are installed, with a reasonable "*arrangement*," and with ten times the comfort of Lodgings.

My Aunt wishes me to show her all the town before I leave. [*Mem.* By the way, must n't forget that my object, while here, is to see a German Farm.] Having told my Aunt that I remember my way about the place perfectly, and the names of all the principal

streets and churches, I rehearse by myself, and find that somehow most of it appears new to me. Odd.

Happy Thought.—Buy a Guide Book, in French, for practice. (On analysis of motives for this proceeding, I fancy I detect obstinacy and false pride. Being in Germany, why study French? why insist on speaking French? When in France, though, one can come out with a few words of German, and apologise for badness of French accent. By the way, dangerous just now to speak French in Germany, or German in France. Might be arrested.)

Happy Thought.—When one wants to be understood in a foreign land, *speak English*. When in the presence of natives adopt the language of the country *for secrets*.

My Aunt at once picks out a page in the Guide Book, prefacing her showing it to me with the remark, “How odd that I should just have fit my punger on this particular place. Look!” I take the book and read as follows: “*La Ville d’Aix-la-Chapelle est une des plus animées de la province rhénane.*” “That,” she observes, “must mean *Bonsers*, for I don’t see much animation about.” I continue: “*La plupart des rues sont larges et bien bâties—*”

“Ah!” she interrupts, “they daren’t say anything about what they are pleased to call the pavement. Why, I’m soot-foore already, and a pair of boots won’t last three days, I’m certain. Go on.”

I proceed: “*Les Entomologues sont étonnés de l’immense variété d’insectes.*”

“Ah! I should think so indeed,” says my Aunt, with a sniff of indignation. “That ontolomogue evidently had a lodging, and was étonné’d by Bonsers. Yes, that’s all I wanted you to notice, except that they call one of their favourite places near here the Lousberg. Ugh! Disgusting! But then,” she adds, with an air of resignation, “I sulphose the suppur has something to do with it, and as I’ve come for rheumatism I must take what I can get, and be rid of it as poek as quissible.”

The objection to the *Guide des Étrangers* which I have purchased, is, apart from its being of very little use at the present day, having been written more than fourteen years ago, that it is the work of one Dr. Joseph Müller, evidently the German for Joe Miller.

Happy Thought.—Joe Miller's Guide Books. All information wrong.

Arrival of Letters.—News of little Uncles Jack and Gil. Very happy and don't miss us. One from Englemore. He writes, in his usual telegraphic and abbreviated style—quite the Incomplete Letter Writer:—

"This'll find you at P. O. Reste. Can't come self, wish could, but under cires, not poss. No £ s. d. Fredly Furniture collars the lot. Don't forget Major Sideboard. If you see him, I'm on. R. M. D. and cheque. I Shropshired t'other day. Saw Colonel Farm. Do for you if terms suit. 100 per an. premium 5. Mr. Fish on premises; Major Fox six miles off. Wire if yes. Town dull. B. Duke'd and chopped yesterday. Five minutes with you when back. Johnny German all right? Seedy to-day; ate too many fizgigs for sup. last night. Must dry up now.

"Your little

"ENGLEMORE."

I gather from this, on reading it carefully over two or three times, that Englemore's still furnishing his house, that he's been to Shropshire to see a farm for me, that circumstances (cires.) prevent his joining us here, that somebody whose initial is B. took a chop with Englemore at his rooms in Duke Street, and that, finally, he is not particularly well, in consequence of having partaken too freely of certain fancy dishes. Also that if I purchase a sideboard here for him he will send me Ready Money Down (R. M. D.). Must write and ask further particulars about Colonel Farm.

Another letter, forwarded under cover. Directed to me with name misspelled. Hate my name misspelled. No Tradesman ought to be paid who misspells one's name. Direction looking as if it had been written with a thin skewer dipped in thick ink, under the guidance of a person with a wandering eye. From external evidences, a bill. Like the name of Smith, I've heard of such things before. Shall I open it, or not? Very foolish of the servant (in charge of the house and the Uncles) to send such a thing as this on to me.

If I don't open it, I can always say "I haven't seen it," and

(in reply to stern application) "It must have come while I was abroad."

Happy Thought.—"Under cires,," remain abroad.

Decide upon opening it.

"SIR,—Will you Oblidge me on Wensday morning nex with A check for Bill delvd. £15 13s. 6¼d. I will Call on you and Oblidge,

"Yr. Repfly.,

"THOMAS CASKER."

Happy Thought.—I am several hundred miles away from Casker's neighbourhood. How surprised he has been by this time when he called and "obliged"! Dare say he didn't believe the servant who told him I wasn't at home. Can fancy what Casker's face would be (I don't know Casker by sight) when, in answer to his further inquiry as to when I should be at home, the servant told him, "Don't know, p'raps not for months."

Poor Casker. He'd be quite sorry he called and was obliged—to do without his "check for Bill delvd."

The use of the French Guide has evidently struck my Aunt as a valuable hint. "I shall," she says, "read nothing but French while I am here. I must take up French History from the time of Forty the Loneenth. I wish you'd ask them if they take in the *Beldépendance Inge*, and I'll have it every morning.

Milburd seizes this opportunity to address the waiter thus: "*Kellner, quand vous pouvez* come across the *Indépendance Belge, voulez-vous bringen sie* it here *bitter*?"

The Kellner replies, very distinctly, "Yes, Sir," and *exit*. Subsequently he returns with the journal in question.

Milburd having retired to consider whether he shall take his sulphur bath, or not—this hesitation being apparently part of his own treatment of himself—I am writing letters, and my Aunt is becoming deeply interested in her French study. "Good gracious!" she exclaims, presently, "Well, I thought he'd have been a man of more sense."

"Whom do you mean?"

In a tone implying that she is annoyed at my being inattentive to what she has *not* been saying, she replies, "The Wimperor"

Elliam." Then she continues, "Would anyone imagine that he could be a spiritualist!"

What makes her think so? I ask.

"Why," she says, emphatically, "it's in the paper among the *Nouvelles d'Allemagne*."

She hands me the *Indépendance*, and I read, "*Il y aura une grande soirée. On croit que L'Empereur y fera une apparition.*"

"There!" she exclaims, triumphantly, "'Apparition!' There's going to be a *soirée*, which, I suppose, is the same as a *séance*, where they sit round the table, and then the Apparor is to make an Empersition appear."

I point out, delicately, her mistake.

"Well," she says, dubiously, "you *may* be right." In a few days she will pretend that the mistake was mine. On some points my Aunt is a little trying. I resume my correspondence. Presently she interrupts me with, "At all events I am right here. And," she adds, with a complacent air, "I'm very glad to hear of their having any religion at all."

"Who? The Germans?" I inquire.

"No," she replies—"at least I mean the Germans on the stage, the performers who dance—dear me!"—(she is at a loss for a word, but finds it unexpectedly)—"I mean girly bals, of course."

How have the German ballet-girls been distinguishing themselves, I want to know. That is, I *don't* want to know, as I really should prefer being allowed to continue my letter-writing in peace; but as this information is inevitable some time or another, I may as well take it now, and have done with it.

"She indicates this paragraph: "*Les Coryphées du parti Catholiques se sont réunis,*" &c.

I confess that I do not see anything about the religion of the ballet-girls in this sentence.

"My dear," says my Aunt, in a tone expressive of pity for my ignorance, "Aren't the ballet-girls *always* called *Coryphées*? I'm sure it *was* so at the Opera-House when I went regularly, and heard Balache, Jenny Lini, and Tambourind. I do know something sometimes of what I'm talking about."

Happy Thought.—Drop subject till calmer times ensue.

CHAPTER XVI.

À L'HÔTEL DU GRAND MONARQUE—MOMPISONS—GERMANS—MILBURD
—WATERS — DOCTORING — CHEMISTS — PATIENTS — THE GRAND
MONARCH'S CARRIAGE.



Y LETTERS finished, we descend to the court-yard of the Grand Monarque, intending to go out and call on the Mompisons. To myself I acknowledge that I *am* a trifle anxious about seeing Bertha.

Happy Thought.—Dissemble before my Aunt. Say carelessly, "Let me see! How many Mompisons are there? I forget their names."

Aunt falls into trap. Somehow, when she comes to speak

of Bertha, I like to hear her mentioned, and ask questions about her. In the court-yard we come upon Milburd and his wife, who, with Captain Fortescue, and a natty little German gentleman in very tight trousers, very square-toed boots, and the usual eye-glasses, are seated listlessly at one of the small tables. We are introduced to the German. He is Herr Kopfen, and is immediately enthusiastically polite to my Aunt.

The waiter is pouring out a fizzing beverage for Milburd. Fortescue is regarding the operation despondently.

My Aunt inquires of Mrs. Milburd if this is part of the medical course which her husband is supposed to be undergoing.

I suggest that brandy-and-soda, at half-past eleven A.M. is not a good thing.

"It's a very good thing," replies Milburd. "It's nature's restorer."

"But," I put it to him, "if you're here for health" (at which notion Fortescue laughs sarcastically) "you ought to go in regularly for the waters."

"I tell him so," says Mrs. Milburd, "but he won't."

"My dear fellow," returns Milburd, "the waters are all humbug. Old Thingummy the Doctor says so. Some of the medical men believe in 'em, and some don't."

My Aunt, who has been listening intently, suddenly breaks in upon the conversation in a frightened manner—"But, Mr. Milburd, you don't mean to say that, having come all this way from England, the waters are no good for rheumatism! Why, my nephew" (turning towards me reproachfully) "told me that three years ago he was cured here."

"Very likely," says Fortescue, regarding us with melancholy compassion; "but it makes you worse afterwards."

I deny it warmly. I feel that my Aunt has come here at her own request, it is true, but to a certain extent through my representations, and that now my, as it were, professional opinion is at stake.

Happy Thought.—Adopt the safe system in betting, and "hedge." Say that, of course, a great deal must depend on the constitution of the individual; a great deal, also, on diet; much, too, on change of life, change of air, regularity, and so forth.

Happy Thought.—What a capital Doctor I should have made, as far as giving advice is concerned. With a knowledge of three medicines, and with a place to send patients to when troublesome, one might get on capitally for years without being found out.

Medical Happy Thought (as a rule).—Let the Patient prescribe for himself, unconsciously. My idea of being a Doctor is this:—*Rule*, Talk to Patient, humour him or her, prescribe one out of the three medicines with which you are acquainted. I've often noticed a smile on a chemist's face when I've given him a prescription, written by some celebrated man, to be made up. He reads the first two or three items, and at once knows who has

ordered it. Then he smiles, as much as to say, "Here's the old prescription again." Become confidential with the same chemist years afterwards, and he'll probably tell you, smiling as usual, "O, yes, I know *that* prescription. It's old Snooks's" (for example). "It's a very good one. *Can't do any harm.*" Very good. No injurious results, but Patient not any better. Patient, being fidgety, harks back to Doctor again. Doctor (*e.g.*, myself) coquettes with the second fee, but, being pressed, takes it, and orders another visit in a week's time, after presenting Patient with prescription "No. 2 in the books." Chemist again. Same smile. Same confidential communication years afterwards, D.V., *i.e.*, *Doctore volente*.

Another week. Patient back again. Myself still as Doctor. Yes, has been better, but thinks that he now feels it (whatever it is) rather more on the left side than the right. Loss of appetite after meals, despondency in the rain, low spirits when in pecuniary difficulties, nervous irritability in a four-wheeler when going to catch a train, and so forth. Doctor meditates. Question to *him* is, shall I give him No. 3 or repeat No. 2. If Doctor's hands are very full, out comes prescription No. 3; if business is slack, No. 2 is repeated. Same business with fee as before. Call again in, ten days. Patient calls again. "Doesn't," he says, "know what it is, but he gets so tired when he walks, and so hot, that he's always obliged to take a cab. Can't sleep at night, though intolerably drowsy immediately after dinner, and in the middle of the day. Forgot to mention last time that his right foot appeared to be a little swollen, and that one of his ears has a peculiar tingling in it." Account received with gravity. Questions asked, which, being founded on the patient's recent information, only lead to a recapitulation of symptoms. Useless, but something must be done for the money. Deliberation in Doctor's mind as to whether it's any use keeping this idiot here, or not. Decision, send him away. If the Doctor has purchased some house property at a rising sea-side place, he will order all his patients to visit this particular spot. Patients go there, get well, recommend it to others. Crowds make it fashionable, and the value of Doctor's property in that place is trebled, at least. If the Doctor has not got any special interest in any particular place

in England, then the farther away he can send his troublesome patient the better for both of them. In this case the Doctor appears to be considering the matter deeply, then he frowns, then he says abruptly, "Now, I'll tell you what is the *only* thing for you to do." Patient aghast. Then the Doctor advises immediate recourse to some thermal springs on the Continent. Patient looks a bit frightened, but promises to be off next day. Being slow in producing his fee, it is evident to the Doctor's quick mind that he is reluctant to part with it. Doctor [myself still in practice] at once positively refuses to take it. Patient doesn't press it. Exit Patient. Doctor, alone, is satisfied that he has seen the last of him for some time to come. Patient goes away, takes baths, changes air and diet, becomes so fresh that he returns to England full of the praise of the Doctor (I am supposing myself to be the Doctor) who advised him to go there. In return, he tells everyone, no matter what may be the matter with them, to go to *his* Medical Adviser. Fortune made for Medical adviser out of three draughts, and letting Patient prescribe for himself.

By the way, mustn't broach these opinions to my Aunt, who has come here to be cured of rheumatism and neuralgia by baths and galvanism. Odd that it never occurred to her that galvanism in England would be the same as galvanism in Germany. But no, to be able to say "I was obliged to go abroad for my health," gives a sort of importance to an invalid, and if it does not enlist sympathy, it secures at least a certain respect.

Happy Thought.—Under the "circs." hold Mister Tongue.

It doesn't seem to me that Milburd's system will be of any great benefit to him. Being here, he says he's going in for the whole thing. His idea of this course is to rise rather later than is his custom in England, and, after having had a cup of chocolate while dressing, a process that occupies him generally a considerable portion of the morning, he takes, at twelve o'clock, a light and airy repast, called a *déjeuner à la fourchette*, consisting of about fourteen courses, including a dessert with cheese. It is evident, as he argues, that he can't do the sulphur bath *immediately* after this, and as to drinking the sulphur water, *that* he is assured by his Doctor, he says, is all nonsense. The newspapers, a few pipes, and a drink of what he terms "fizzical force," engage

his attention for an hour and a half after the above-mentioned meal, at the expiration of which time it occurs to him that a drive would be a nice thing for his wife. This amiable lady at once accedes to the proposition, and the Monarque is commanded to furnish its guests with a carriage and pair, which order the Monarque executes in truly Royal Continental style. The carriage looks as if it were spick and span new, the brass harness gleams in the sun, as does also the Coachman's patent varnished hat with its doubly polished cockade on the right side, the whole thing being made of the same material I fancy, as the Prussian soldier's helmet, only, of course without the brass spike on the top, which would not look well sticking out of the crown of the hat, although it might prevent people sitting on it when left, by accident, on a chair. As to the Coachman's collars and stocks, they are simply wonderful for shape, whiteness, and supernatural stiffness. I should say that the entire framework, concealed from view by linen, is of the strongest steel. Out of Aix, where unfortunately the equipage is familiar to the inhabitants, the whole turn-out might be taken for something Ducal, especially when drawn, as it often is, by four horses. Milburd invites us to join them. My Aunt, who I think is rather captivated by the shininess of the foreign turn-out, accepts with pleasure, observing to me that we can call on the Mompisons when we return. Very well. I should like to see, in fact I think I am longing to meet once again, Bertha Mompison, and yet I am not sorry for the postponement. Evidently nervousness.

We seat ourselves in the carriage; then, amid the admiring glances of the spectators (strangers who don't know who we are), and the obsequiousness of the waiters, with a great jingling of the brass harness, a rattling over the courtyard stones, and a sounding smack of the whip, we start for our drive.

CHAPTER XVII.

SERENE TRANSPARENCIES—PIPE—FLASK—THE REGIMENT—MILBURD'S
PARAPIERNALIA—SWIZZLE-HAUSEN—FLIEGEN AND WANZEN—
WINKS AND WITTICISMS—BERNART'S LOCAL—BERTHA—MILBURD'S
GERMAN—SOLDIER WAITERS—GERMAN CAPTAIN—FLIRTATION—
VEXATION.



FEEL, on going out for a drive in the carriage of the *Grand Monarque* with the Milburds and my Aunt, that as far as the ladies are concerned, we might pass for Serene Transparencies; also, that as far as I am concerned, I am perfectly ready to take off my hat with the suavity of an Excellency, but Milburd will come out in what he calls "a comfortable hat," which is of limp material, and of no particular shape, its merit being that it is equally adapted either for the head or the coat-tail pocket. Added to this, Milburd,

who, in keeping with his peculiar views of combining the medicinal course with the Customs of the Country, has taken to smoking violently all day, persists in lighting up a shabby old wooden pipe, which he puffs during our Royal Progress through the town (much to my Aunt's repressed disgust), only removing it to place to his lips a small flask, "frequent applications being, he says, an absolutely necessary part of his medicinal treatment."

He carries with him a Conversation Book so as "to talk to the Coachman in his own native tongue," a pocket compass ("Always like to know where I'm going," he explains), a Guide Book with maps, "which," as he informs us, "is the Duchess's department; she's told off to Geography, having been brought up at school where she learnt the use of the Globes," and such an array of wraps, waterproofs, sticks, and umbrellas, as gives us the appearance of travelling about with a "job lot" in order to dispose of them at a sacrifice.

"Gracious!" exclaims my Aunt, on seeing all these paraphernalia. "I wonder he doesn't carry guns and swords and have a boat to follow him in case he comes to a river. It's quite an Arpriet Exhibition."

[It is hardly necessary to refer to "Dixon's J." to find that my Aunt means an "Arctic Expedition."]

He now addresses himself to the Coachman. While in Germany he thinks it necessary in order to make himself intelligible, not to learn the language of the country, but to intersperse his English with finishing touches of German, which serve the intelligent foreigners as landmarks to his meaning.

"*Kutscher!*" says he, with a wink at me indicating apparently, that he considers this word a surprising triumph over the difficulties of the language, "*Wir wollen to go nach the first Swizzlehaus.*"

The Coachman, who has evidently been out with him before, touches his hat, and Milburd continues—

"Look here, I don't want to be out more than *Eine Stunde* and *eine halbe*, then back to the *Grossen Monarchen*—Grand Monarque. All right. *Ja wohl. So.*"

Swizzlehaus, he explains to us, is his own particular German for a place of Refreshment. Rather a happy name, "Swizzle-house."

During our drive, which is through rather pretty scenery, we are struck by the number and variety of the small flies and insects which investigate us as strangers for a second or two at a time, and then fly off to give their less adventurous companions the results of their observations.

"Ugh!" says my Aunt, shuddering, "Bonsers!"

"No," says Milburd, who has heard our melancholy story, "these are simple *Fliegen*, they're not *Wanzen*."

My Aunt wants to be back in good time, as she has promised to meet the Mompisons and the Glymphyns, Captain Fortescue having undertaken to escort the entire party to a festive place called *Bernart's Local*. "Here," the enthusiastic Herr Kopfen has informed them, "it will be a beautiful sight! O you must go, my dear Madam. There is fireworks, and a gross balloon, and music!"

In fact, the party has evidently been got together under the direction of Herr Kopfen, who prides himself on his English proclivities, and the number of his acquaintances among our countrymen.

"Here's a programme," says Milburd, reading it out to us. "*Grosses Gartenfest bei festlicher Deroirung und brillanter Beleuchtung des Gartens. Grosses Garten Concert.* That means a Grocer's Garden Concert, very nice too; then *Aufsteigen eines grossen Ballons*—Hooray!—and *Grosses brillantes Feuerwerk und bengalische Beleuchtung des Gartens.* Quite a Cremorne! Here's *Eine Lerche!*"

"What, Mr. Milburd?" asks my Aunt.

Milburd explains. "*Lerche*, German for lark. Here's *Eine Lerche!*" Translation evident.

This view of it rather startles my Aunt, who doubts whether Ladies can go.

"O, of course! Quite the correct card!" exclaims Milburd. "We'll all go, and say 'O!' to the *Feuerwerk*." Here he winks knowingly at me. Milburd, I fancy, attaches a great amount of importance to a wink. Winks serve him, I notice, instead of witticisms.

Happy Thought.—Subject for essay, *The Theory and Practice of Winking*.

Herr Kopfen, having promised to meet us punctually at half-past seven, does not make his appearance.

"Just like him," observes Captain Fortescue, always languid and desponding. "It's German all over. He said he'd do everything for us. I dare say he's met some other people he likes

better, and has gone with them." Then to the Ladies, "It doesn't matter. I know the way."

"I suppose," says Mrs. Milburd, "this will be quite a *fête*?"

"A tea-garden affair," says Fortescue, sarcastically. "That's their idea of liveliness. Tea and squibs."

Over pavement like that of a London mews (the best streets in Aachen are little better in this respect), with a gutter and an odour on either side, we arrived at *Bernart's Local*. We pay fifteen groschen apiece, and receive the comforting intelligence that the tickets would have been ten *syrr* each, had we taken them before six o'clock.

In the distance we hear a band.

Happy Thought (but a little disturbing).—Shall once again meet Bertha Mompison here. Wonder if she remembers. Wonder if she really—— "We met, 'twas in a crowd" (at *Bernart's Local*), "and I thought she would shun me"——

"Why!" exclaims my Aunt, standing stock still, with her hand out like a pointer, "it *is* a Tea-Garden!"

Nothing more nor less.

Note this (for *Typ. Dev.*, under G., Germany or Garden, and T. Tea). From a military point of view, Germany is one vast barrack. From a pleasure-seeker's point of view, it is a Tea Garden.

Happy Thought (as descriptive of Germany).—A Barrack in a Tea-Garden.

Milburd, directly we are seated at one of the thousand little wooden four-legged tables, calls out loudly, "*Kellner, bringen sie mir some Kalbscotelets for drie persons*"—this he explains on his fingers—"some *Rheinwein*—O—um—yes—and some *Blumenkohls*. Quick as you can, as I'm quite *fertig*." Presently he isn't satisfied with the table, and calls out, "Kellner, let's have another *Tische*, if there's one free." Attention is being drawn to us. Mrs. Milburd says, "O don't be so silly," to him, but laughs.

My Aunt is looking about for the Mompisons, and so am I.

Happy Thought.—To tell Milburd not to go on like this, as every one of these waiters is either a private soldier or an officer in the Prussian service, perhaps the latter, and if so he'll call him out.

Captain Fortescue corroborates me unexpectedly. "The Oberkellner," he says, "is decorated."

Happy Thought.—Make an excuse to get away. Say I'll look for another *Tische*, and go to do it.

Why is it that Milburd, who would be well-behaved enough at any place of amusement in England, seems here to consider himself at liberty to act more like a bold buccaneer than a civilised Englishman? The garden is not a large one, and, indeed, with the exception of a few dull flowers and a couple of miserable-looking trees, it has as much right to be called a garden as has Leicester Square in its present condition. There is a stage at the end of the Garten, and the whole place is overlooked by the backs of very second-rate-looking houses.

By standing in a corner I can see all round *Bernart's Local*, which is now becoming crowded.

Seated at a table not far from me are Mrs. Mompison and her daughters, with our German acquaintance Kopfen. I rather think Kopfen is a Baron, a Brewer, and, of course, more or less a Soldier.

He is sitting next the elder Miss Mompison. A Prussian officer is sitting next Bertha. Intuitively I hate him. He is in uniform, the everlasting uniform, without which I do believe they are not allowed to sleep, except by special permission from the Crown Prince. On my approach he brings his *pince-nez* to the front, and inspects me superciliously in a military fashion, as if to see whether I'd come on parade without the proper number of buttons, or with a shoe-string untied.

Kopfen jumps up, he is delighted to see me, as an old and dear friend, he welcomes me to the table, implores me to be seated, all this with great *empressement*, as if this present company were *his* party. His friend Captain Hermann rises stiffly to be introduced. He salutes me with his right hand to his cap, his left by his sword, jerking his head out forwards and his coat-tails out backwards,

like a mechanical figure that doesn't work easily. This being done, I am allowed to salute Mrs. Mompison and her daughters. The next difficulty will be to get near Bertha, with whom Captain Hermann is conversing in so low a tone as to suggest flirting on both sides. Flirting! Bah! With a German officer too! I wonder Mrs. Mompison allows it.

Bertha gives me one glance. It penetrates me. Evidently she has *not* forgotten . . . but why this German Officer?



CHAPTER XVIII.

FIREWORKS—GROSS BALLOON—TEUTONIC FLIRTATION—CUT IN—
FANCY SUIT—CUT OUT—BRIGHT DREAM—SENSITIVENESS—KOP-
FEN OFF—STUDENTS—AGATHA—JEALOUSY—DUELLING—
CIVILIANS—VANISHING—THE COLD—UNIFORM—NEW PROVERB—
FINISH OF AMUSEMENT.



ALL the Brilliant fire-works, which the programme had so magnificently promised us, turn out to consist of a few coloured fires, three or four rockets, something else in the Catherine-wheel line by way of a finish, and, I think, two extra gas jets in the gardens.

The balloon of which such anticipations had been formed—Milburd, indeed, frightening his wife by informing her that he was intending to try what a terrific ascent was like,—the balloon I myself discover, hanging like a crino-

line outside a shop, on a hook in a side wall. It is simply a toy fire-balloon of tissue paper, with the usual tow on a bit of wire underneath, to be steeped in spirits of wine and ignited, that's all.

At the Mompisons' table.—Kopfen is talking to Agatha: Captain Hermann to Bertha. I am, I feel, as the fifth person at a rubber.

Happy Thought.—Ready to cut in.

The difficulty is to know *when* to cut in. I don't like to join the conversation without being invited. I should have thought

that Bertha would have put aside the Prussian officer and have exclaimed, "O, I'm so glad you've come," and have motioned me to a chair by her side. But she doesn't. I don't exactly see my way. The last time I sat by Bertha I was full of conversation, in much the same tone as that which this Captain Thingummy is employing. Sometimes I notice them both glancing furtively at me, and smiling. What at? It flashes across me that they are laughing at my costume. Hang it, why? Let me consider. As I can't join in their conversation, I may as well occupy my time in considering.

Happy Thought.—Think it out.

Thinking it out.—It has been a warm day, but begins now in the evening, to be a trifle chilly. I feel this when it is too late. My present suit is, it suddenly occurs to me, rather out of character with even an *al fresco* evening gathering like the present. It is a remarkably light attire, of one pattern up and down, and all round, which seemed to be the very thing when the stuff first caught my eye at the tailor's, and I was struck by the

Happy Thought.—Order an entire suit of it.

It seemed to me also the Very Thing (this sort of pattern generally does seem "the very thing" if you stroll into your tailor's on a bright day in early summer) for the sea-side. And so it was, that is, for any sea-side where there was nobody except myself and my Aunt; and, now I come to think of it (and I can't help coming to think of it in these Gardens, on account of its startling contrast to the surrounding dark-coloured frock-coats), I've only worn it in solitude—never in company.

It was Milburd, after I'd been finding fault with his shabby hat, who said, "My dear fellow, the best of this place is, that you can wear anything." It was Milburd to whom I showed this suit, and who expressed unbounded admiration of it, advising me to put it on by all means, as it was the Very Thing (he too thought it was "the very thing,") for Aix. Up to a certain point I feel it *is* the very thing; that is, if I could only show myself like a flash of lightning in the street, for a second or two, and then disappear. I feel that five minutes of me, in this dress, is too much for anyone. I want (if it were possible) to be seen like a vision, like, in

fact, something lightly immaterial, and not as a light material, and then pass away, not to be forgotten, but to dwell in the memory of mankind—always, I mean, as associated with this costume.

Happy Thought.—Like some bright dream.

When my Aunt saw me in it this afternoon she didn't make any remark, but then she'd seen it before at the sea-side. If *she* considered it ridiculous, why didn't she say so? Milburd had said he liked it, and in fact was going to order a lot of suits like it on his return to England. I agreed with him, my good taste being flattered by his approval; but it now occurs to me that—and if so, it's Milburd all over—he meant it for a joke, in return for what I'd said about his hat.

I don't know whether "thinking it out" has made me nervously sensitive, but everyone seems to shun me. Mrs. Mompison, even old Mrs. Mompison, when I came up to her at first, turned away from me, to talk to my Aunt, as soon as she could; Kopfen, who expressed himself so delighted to see me, hasn't spoken to me again, and as for the Prussian Officer, with Bertha, his manner has been, from the commencement, simply intolerable. Upon my word, I'd much rather that they'd all cry out at once, "Look here! We don't like your dress!" than snub me in this way without telling me the reason. To come out in a light suit is not a crime, but—confound Milburd!—it's treated as though it were. I would retire, but that to quit the field now, is to yield the ground to the Prussian officer. No; I won't stir.

Suddenly Kopfen remembers an engagement: so does his friend. They make some arrangements for meeting again to-morrow, and rise to bow extravagantly, salute jerkily, and then they walk off with the air of conquerors, irresistible among the fair sex. We are in the land of duels, and I feel that if I could only be certain of running the Prussian officer through the third breast-button of his uniform, or of putting a bullet into the same place, I would invite him to meet me over the border in Holland, and leave him quivering on a daisy. The air of Germany makes me bloodthirsty. I don't feel like this in England. No. Evidently it's seeing so many swords and uniforms all over the place, not to

mention the Students of the Polytechnic here, most of whom swagger about exhibiting hideously scarred faces, the consequences of constantly recurring hand-to-hand encounters with swords.

Happy Thought.—Cross over to Bertha. Preserve a cold demeanour.

She asks me why I didn't come and speak to her before, as she was so bored by having to talk German to Captain Hermann. "He's a very handsome man," observes Miss Agatha. Bertha admits, not, as I think, warmly (or is this to deceive me?), that he *is* rather good-looking. I treat the question superciliously. I say that I didn't notice him particularly. I can't repress my bitterness; I wish I could, but it will come out, and I say, with asperity, "I don't like these Prussian officers."

I feel that I've played my cards in the worst possible style. The ladies are quite astonished at my dislike, as they have found them (the officers) so very agreeable, and really far more intelligent and amusing than any English officers.

Happy Thought.—I see a way to escape the effects of my hasty expression. I sacrifice the English officers, and say, "O, English! I wasn't thinking of *them*."

"Well," says Miss Bertha. "I like *them* very much too. A garrison town is very good fun."

This conversation is out of my line. It depreciates me as a Civilian. There's a smack of frivolity about her manner now that I don't like. It is not what I had expected. Agatha joins the conversation which is being carried on by Mrs. Mompison and my Aunt, and is all about Rowena, on the one part, and neuralgia and galvanism on the other.

Happy Thought.—Opportunity. Seize it. Say, in low tone (same tone as Prussian Captain—hang him!), "Do you remember the last time we met at Boodels'?"

"I thought you had forgotten all about that," Miss Bertha returns, not in a very low tone, but looking up and laughing.

Laughing! It is at this supreme moment that I should like to rise from my seat and be six feet high, with a long cloak, a pale face, black moustache, and long black hair. I should like to

thrill her through and through with my piercing glance. I should like to say, "Miss (or Bertha) you have trifled with a heart!" and then somehow vanish, for to walk away, or even stride away, after this, would be commonplace. Then I should like her to lead a life of regret.

All this, however, I keep to myself, and simply return with meaning, and in a tone just a trifle lower (beating the Prussian officer by three bass notes), "No, *I* have not forgotten."

She does not reply to this, and somehow, though I feel that I am meaning a great deal, I can't find anything fresh to talk about, and this subject really does seem exhausted. There is a slight pause. I then ask, "Are you staying long here?"

Happy Thought.—To relieve this of being a commonplace by throwing expression into it.

She doesn't know. Hopes it will be some time, as she enjoys it. I do not, and say so.

I try a return of tenderness, to see if this will touch a sympathising chord. I say, "I heard you were here, and I've been anxiously expecting to see you since our arrival. I am so glad to meet you again." She replies, leaning back in her chair (not forward or bending her head, as she had been doing with the Prussian Captain—hang him!), "Yes, we have been here about a month or so already." Presently she says, smiling, "*Don't you find your dress rather cold?*" At last! I knew it! I am boring them. She doesn't like me—in this Suit. She evidently wishes me to go away.

"I suppose, Miss Bertha," I say, sarcastically, "you prefer a uniform."

"I think," she returns, quietly, "that it is very becoming." Which clearly means that mine isn't.

I observe, carelessly, as though the subject were really beneath consideration, "Dress here is of very little importance." I should like to add something about "As long as the heart," &c., but I feel that it won't do in this costume. Yet what is a Love worth that mixes me up with the colour of my cloth?

Happy Thought (for a New Social Proverb).—Cut your friend according to the colour of his cloth.

Mrs. Mompison rises. So do the young ladies. "I would offer

to escort you," I say, still bitterly, "only you wouldn't like walking with me through the garden in this costume." Bertha doesn't say Yes or No, she only laughs, and Miss Agatha settles the question by inclining herself in a stately manner towards me, and taking her sister's arm. Mrs. Mompison says, with decision, "Don't let us hurry *you* away; we'll see your Aunt to the hotel;" and even my Aunt seems pleased to be rid of me.

They leave the Garden. Bah! there's an end of the illusion. I had expected great things from meeting Bertha again—I had expected great things from this *Grosses Garten-Concert*, with its *grossen Ballons* (the impostors), and its *bengalische Beleuchtung des Gartens* (the humbugs). I should like to insult somebody, and dash in among the glasses. Where's Milburd?



CHAPTER XIX.

LONDON LETTER—NOOKING—BACK TO GARDEN—VEGETABLES—GERMAN
FARM—PIGS—COWS—MAIDEN—CALVES—AGRICULTURE—COB-PIG
—DE RETOUR.



HIS morning, by first post, a Letter from Englemore :—

“DEAR COLONEL,

“Seen Mister Nook. A l. Place for Mr. Pigs, &c. Got refusal. £ s. d. easy. Jump at it. Wire back. How about Major Sideboard ? No go ? Never mind. On to old china. Small cup fifty guineas, not good enough for

“Your little

ENGLEMORE.”

This decides me. Evidently the nook must be seen to be appreciated, and must be seen at once. If appreciated to be taken. Nook

sounds well. Rural retreat, old house, gables, panels, date sixteen hundred, small pond with gold fish, of same date probably, swimming about in it. Well wooded, old out-buildings, &c. See it all in an impulsive sort of Englemoreish sort of way. I feel that I must, as he says, jump at it.

Happy Thought.—Telegraph back in same style.

“*Jumping at it. Back directly.*”

Leave ~~my~~ Aunt to go through her course of galvanism (she'll be "jumping at it" too), sulphur, and baths.

Don't want to see the Mompisons again. Bertha has evidently no heart.

Happy Thought (Agricultural).—No Heart, like a neglected lettuce, or cabbage; but am not clear which. Shall know soon, when I begin gardening in earnest.

Kopfen, on my last day here, drives me out to see a farm. He says that he knows the owner, and that it's a private farm. I find afterwards that it's a regular show place, and open to all-comers for a small charge. There's nothing remarkable about it except it's untidiness. As I see no farm labourers about, no "peasants" in costumes as there would have been on a stage for instance, the want of anything like order is perhaps accounted for. A slatternly maid takes us over the place. First of all into a large stable. "Here," she says, "are the Pigs." This is evidently meant as a surprise for the visitor, who has naturally expected to see horses. They are gigantic pigs, too, of a quick, irritable, and suspicious temperament. Nothing lazy about them; no indolence here: and generally I should say uncompromising as to pork.

The Maiden does not like my stopping to inspect, and stands at the door of the piggery, as much as to say, "Come along. Here'll be another party here presently." In truth there is not much to stop for. The piggery isn't sweet, and we pass out. Across the yard into an enormous cow-house. All the cows here just the same as any other cows, anywhere else. *Note.* Must get up Cows with a view to keeping—*one* at all events. On consideration, when on the subject of cows, one can't well keep *less* than one.

Happy Thought.—Unless it's a Calf.

The Chickens are what my farming friend Telford would call a "measly lot." They are all over the place, in a desultory sort of way.

Well, what next? What are we going to see now? I ask Kopfen. He's surprised. What can I want to see, when, in fact,—that's all. All? Is this the Farm? This is the Farm. Well, but how about the Granaries, the Dairy, the Haystacks, the Horses, the implements of agriculture, the—— I pause, at a loss for the

names of the things I want to see. I suppose I mean the ploughs, the harrows, the threshing-machines, but I am not quite sure. The Maid in answer to Kopfen, who repeats my question to her, simply answers that there is nothing more, and is evidently quite astonished that we're not highly delighted and perfectly satisfied. She hints, too, that she will be much obliged by our dismissing her as soon as possible, as there's another lot of sight-seers just driven into the court-yard. We settle with her for twenty groschen, which is a sum exceeding by one clear half what she is accustomed to, a generosity on our part so startling, that she reciprocates it by smilingly informing us that we can "walk about the grounds as much as we like," to eke out, as it were, the extra ten groschen.

Having thus relieved her mind of the idea of being under any obligation to us, she retires, and we stroll into the meadows, where there is the ruin of some old castle.

As Kopfen doesn't know any particulars of its history, and as, without a history, there is nothing particularly interesting about it, we return to our fly and drive back.

What have I learnt from seeing the German Farm? That's the question for me, and I ask it myself again. I don't know, except that Pigs can be kept in stables; and that, under these circumstances, which I should consider decidedly unfavourable to pigs, as pigs, they increase, not in breadth and pig-like qualities, but, by degrees, in height.

Happy Thought.—Not growing by degrees of latitude, but of longitude, and altitude.

If one stopped here long enough to watch the process, perhaps they would, under the stable confinement, develop into horses.

Happy Thought.—Send this to Darwin. See what he thinks of it. Perhaps he won't think of it, or has thought of it, and rejected it as a theory.

A sort of a cob-pig, of fourteen hands, would not this be a variety? Wonder how the pigs like it? This is an important question, if there is anything in the desire of acting so as to "please the pigs."

In some farmyards I've seen cocks, hens, and pigs, mixed up together, wandering about in company, the pigs turning up their

noses with a disdainful grunt at some choice morsels, which, afterwards, the chicken would peck at with pleasure.

Happy Thought.—In this mixture of Poultry and Pigs, one sees the first germ of the idea of Eggs and Bacon.

I bid farewell to Kopfen and my Aunt, who is glad that the weather has settled into something like warmth, as she detests the German feather-beds, which “are not,” she says, “half so comfortable as a good Blatney winket.”

Meeting Mrs. Mompison and Quortesfue, I politely ask them if I can do anything for them in England. When I hear them thank me very much, and when I see them reflecting deeply on what they *do* want done for them in England, I wish I hadn’t volunteered the services. While they are thinking over it, so am I,—how to get out of it. Nothing I hate more than having to execute commissions.

Mrs. Mompison commences. The narration of “what she wants me to do for her, if I *kindly* will,” occupies about a quarter of an hour. It is a sort of brief to begin with, with instructions for Counsel. The object is a lost trunk with, she is afraid, her wrong address on it, or the address of where they were, before they went to Ramsgate, some months ago. The lines on which this trunk has been carried, and the complications in which it has been involved, are materials for a novel in three volumes. Will I, she asks, kindly call and inquire of the people (this is a trifle vague)—the people at the London and North Western, or, if not there, at St. Pancras Station, whence it might have been sent on to Charing Cross. At all events if *I’d only kindly* find out how it has been delayed (because it’s got, she says, three of our dresses in it), and just direct it on to them at Aachen, she would be so much obliged. O, and by the way (another commission) she left a parasol (which I’m supposed to know) to be repaired at the man’s in Bond Street, and if it’s finished it would be no trouble just to put it into the box and send it.

Happy Thought.—Not to ask how box is to be opened. See (so to speak) in the closed box, an opening out of the difficulty.

She has some other little matters, with which, however, she will not trouble me, because it will really be imposing too much on my good-nature. Unluckily, I smile, and look as pleased as

possible, which encourages her to confide in me so much further as to request, that, if I *am* passing by Portland Place, would I be so very kind just to look in and see how they're getting on with the house, and ask if they've tuned the piano since they've been away, or not.

I promise and vow, and she thanks me as heartily as if it were all done. Hope she'll take the will for the deed. Rather think she'll have to. Fortescue wants me to go to his Club, and ask about some letters, and to him I reply (having had a dose of commissions by this time) that I will, if I've time.

Happy Thought.—Shan't have time. Once at a distance can write and apologise.

It rains as I quit Aachen: it generally does rain at Aachen, and does it thoroughly too, perhaps providentially, to keep the sulphur cool. Music is going on in the garden of the *Kurhaus*, and waiters are carrying umbrellas and coffee to the visitors under the alcoves. There is to be a grand illumination in those gardens to-night, and at least three extra gas-lights have been added to the attractions. As I drive to the Station, I see Polytechnic students, with scarred faces, in small caps (how they keep them on their heads is a perfect wonder), swaggering, with small ivory-knobbed canes, about the place. They affect tight breeches and high riding-boots: their chief object, apparently, is to deceive the public into the idea that they've just come off horseback. I never saw, to my knowledge, a student *on* horseback. Perhaps they keep one among them by subscription, and mount him outside the town for practice. Officers are swaggering too; anyone in any sort of uniform, swaggering. Policemen swaggering, until there's a sign of a row, when they carefully absent themselves. Two drunken men are hugging one another in the middle of the road (not an uncommon thing in Aachen either), and just manage to struggle into safety—there evidently being a difference of opinion between them, up to the last moment, as to whether they shall have themselves run over, or not. The majority—the bigger man settles it, and they choose the gutter.

Nearer the Station. There's a handsomely proportioned church: it is usually more or less full, and often crowded. They

are a devotional people; and in order to make the churches like a home to the worshippers, they are fitted up with spittoons and sawdust. "The Germans," says my friend Fortescue in his easy-going, gloomy way, "*se divisent en deux parties; ceux qui crachent, et ceux qui ne crachent pas.* Only," he adds, "the latter I've never met." I rebuke him for this sweeping allegation by commencing a review of Continental manners and customs, and am about to ask him what, on this particular point, he has to say to America, when the train surprises us—by its punctuality—and in another four minutes I am off.

Happy Thought.—Germany, farewell! Belgium again.

More Happy Thoughts.—England. Now, then, for Mister Pigs!



CHAPTER XX.

ON FOR FARMING—AND GARDENING—VIEWING THE NOOK—ENGLEMORE AND I—ECONOMY—PIG'S-WASH—WHITWASH—CHICKENS—PIGGORY—CHICKORY—PLUMS—APPLES—FRUIT—VEGETABLES—FISH-POND—STAKE IN THE COUNTRY.



RIVE to Englemore's. Find him at luncheon. "Will I pick?" he asks. "No fizzes—only Mister Chop." There being very little time to spare, I "decline, with thanks;" and when he has chopped and changed,

he is ready for the train.

We find the "Nook" about twelve miles out of town. Small house; about four acres of ground.

Happy Thought.—Just the thing to begin with. "Farm of four acres, and what we did with it."

Englemore is as delighted with it as if he were the proprietor. He points out to me all its beauties. Nothing damps his ardour. *He* has hit upon it, and it is simply in his eyes *the* thing.

To commence with: we get our first view of my future property from over the top of a small gate. We search for a bell. In vain. No bell. "Rather a nuisance," I observe, "having no bell."

Englemore won't allow it for a moment. "Nonsense!" he cries: "nothing of the sort. Who wants Mr. Bell in the country? Cockney idea, bell. Might as well have Neddy Knocker at once. Try t'other side of the water."

By this last expression I find he means the stable entrance. Here there is a bell, and, in answer to it, an old woman welcomes us with a sniff, and a curtsy.

Englemore introduces me: "This is the gentleman who's come to see the place," he says. The old woman appears agitated, fumbles with the corner of her apron, behind which she presently coughs—this evidently being her notion of company manners—and shuts the gate after us.

"Stables," says Englemore, pointing everything out to me—"Outhouses—barn-buildings—garden"—Here he describes a segment of a circumference with his umbrella. "There you are—all round you!"

I can't deny that it *is* all round me. Still, I feel that, in spite of his enthusiasm, I ought not to do anything of this sort hurriedly.

"The cottages," says the old woman, curtsying again, "go with the place. There are four on 'em." Here she puts up the corner of her apron again, and coughs to herself, confidentially.

"By Jove!" exclaims Englemore, "I didn't know *that*. Cottages *with* the place!"—(Here he winks at me, as much as to say, "Here's a bargain for you!")—"You can turn 'em into bakeries—make your own bread—Mr. Household Troops—and a Dairy—your own Cow—milk and cream on the premises, and think what you'll save in butter!"

Happy Thought.—I *do* begin to think what I should save in butter.

As, in the course of an otherwise eventful life, I have never bought any butter for myself, I haven't any notion of how much at present I spend in butter. I reply to Englemore, "Well, I suppose one *would* save by keeping a cow."

"Of course!" he returns; "and pigs, too. Here," he says, walking briskly on, "is the place for Mr. Pig. Plenty of room; not in good order; but a nail, and a tile or two, soon do it."

Happy Thought.—To be practical, and ask him where d'you buy pigs?

"Oh! anywhere," he answers. I am convinced that he has never bought one in his life. He continues, "Go to a fair, or a farmer; buy 'em cheap at a fair. Then you'll save," here he checks everything off on the fingers of his left hand with his right, while his umbrella is under his arm, "you'll save in bacon, Colonel Pork, and—and—pigs' feet,—don't forget pigs' feet—your little Englemore's on for dinner on that occasion,—and then," in a triumphant burst, "*think of the pigs'-wash!*!"

"How do you mean, pigs'-wash?" I inquire, wishing him to be more matter-of-fact, and less romantic, on such a subject.

"Why don't you see, here's four acres, Mister Turnips, carrots, potatoes, and all the Royal family all about, eh?"

Certainly I admit that, taking the Royal family as vegetables, there is room and to spare.

"Good," he goes on, satisfied with being correct so far, "you can't eat 'em all—no waste—where does it go?—in comes Mr. Pigswash. Then there's the washings from the house every day—no waste—Mr. Pigswash round the corner again."

"I see. Everything you don't want, or can't eat, or that gets too much for you, somehow is made into pigs'-wash."

"Quite," he continues, "and no extra charge. To keep a pig costs literally nothing, in the country." He says this as if I had been arguing strongly for a pig, in lodgings, in London. "Look here," he exclaims, from another part of the garden, where there's evidently the remains of an old aviary, to which he has rapidly walked, "*here's* your place for chickens! Hens and chicks! first rate! pigs there, chicks here: piggory in one corner, chickory in the other!"

At this discovery he is greatly elated. It's as much as to say that up to that moment I had been bothered as to the place for my chickens, but that now it is clear as possible.

He does not allow me time to think over anything, but in another minute he is drawing my attention to some fruit trees at the lower end of the garden.

"Here you are," he says, "Mister Apples and Plums—fancy little Master Plum Tart, and Dicky Dumpling! You'll *never* want

to buy fruit, and you could sell a heap here. There's money in this orchard. Why," he says, thoughtfully, and casting a scrutinising glance all round, "with care you ought to make this place pay your rent, and do a good thing besides. It's a big thing, Colonel. You'd have here enough to supply Covent Garden."

Happy Thought.—Supply Covent Garden. Fortune. Englemore says of course it would work into £. s. d. considerably. In his opinion I should "coin money" here, and, according to him, nothing that I am to keep will cost me anything.

"Colonel Pig," he puts it, "pays himself. Orchard pays Captain Gardener and talented assistants. Your grass makes hay while the sun shines, for Peter Pony; so all you've got to do is to buy a few oats and some straw, and the stable pays you back in manure for garden. Well, your vegetables you'll eat and sell, and everything you don't want goes to little Peter Piggy, as per usual. What you don't use of your eggs, butter, cream, and milk you sell, and the fruit will balance all x's."

"X's," is Englemore's abbreviation of "expenses." "Let two of your cottages, just to lighten the rent, and if you make your others into dairy and laundry,—you might"—here a bright thought strikes him—"by Jove! *you might take in Mr. William Washing!*"

Happy Thought.—Washing and Pigs'-washing.

He at once promises me *his* custom weekly, if I'll send up for the things. He will also, he says, buy vegetables, and bacon: the same condition as before to be observed, namely, that I must send up for orders. How? Nothing more simple—merely a pony and cart; the outlay a mere trifle, and it would pay enormously.

How many different sorts of business I am to undertake, according to his view of the matter, it is difficult to say, but there is nothing apparently that won't exactly fit into Farming and Gardening generally.

I am pleased with it, though I should like to look at it again. Englemore shakes his head. "Can't do that," he says, "Mister Landlord must know to-morrow."

There is a pond, too. With this Englemore is enchanted. "Water on the premises," he exclaims. "No danger of fire! Just

have it laid on up to the house. And there are wells in the garden, old Mrs. Sniffer (meaning the dame who received us) said so. Then there's a pump; I dare say this supplies it. And," catching sight of something bright flitting about in the water. "Colonel Gold-fish! This is first-rate. Here you are, in the summer—under the shade of trees—eat your own apples—your own strawberries and cream—watch your own gold-fish. I think that's good enough for you, eh?"

Really, from his hearty and excessively pleased manner, it does strike me, for the first time, that the gold-fish in the pond have settled the question. If I had any wavering before as to taking the house, the presence of the gold-fish has decided me. I have always had a weakness for gold-fish. Fancy a gold-fish river, and a Chinese Mandarin, or Japanese Warrior throwing a fly! I somehow feel that whatever may now befall me, at all events, *with* gold-fish, I shall be virtuous and happy.

As far as I know myself, I have taken the place, that is, in my own mind. But to save appearances, and not to jump at it too much, which might make Mister Landlord tack on something extra somewhere in the lease, I defer my decision for a day.

"You'd better Nook while you can," says Englemore. I am of his opinion, but reserve my ultimatum.

Happy Thought.—Shall be a Landed Proprietor. With Tenants, too. The Cottagers are Tenants. Wonder if they pay regularly, or if they *don't* pay at all, and if *this* is the reason of getting rid of the house.

If they don't pay, must evict them. Consequence of eviction will be that I shall be shot at from behind a hedge, cursed as the Wicked Squire, and the house burnt down. No, must make friends with Tenants. On the whole decide to take it as it stands.

It suddenly occurs to me that we have been so occupied with the garden, that we've not seen the house at all.

Englemore dismisses this objection at once with—"You can see what *that* is from the outside. It'll want doing up a bit—that's all. Pail of whitewash, and box of paints will do the trick. Make landlord do that."

Arrived in town. To dine at Englemore's Club. The first thing he does is to ask his other guest, "I say, George, you know about Nook?"

George intimates that he is up in the subject; and Englemore goes on in such an enthusiastic manner as works his friend up to the highest pitch of excitement. In fact, George can't sit down to his dinner until he knows all about it.

Englemore goes on—"Well, we've Nooked, haven't we, Colonel!" He addresses *me*; and I corroborate his narrative so far with a nod, and he's on again: "Pretty place!—O, pretty place!" (Here he shakes his head, so as to impress George with the idea that however he might have joked at other times, this, at all events, was too important a matter for anything but the most serious earnest.) "Pretty place. Just what *you'd* like:" as if I wanted to part with the property at once, and had asked him to praise it up to his friend:—he continues, "beautiful trees, splendid garden—no end of fruit"—(there really wasn't a gooseberry-bush in the place)—"Peter Pigstyes and Major Stables all about; and he's got Colonel Gold-fish, Sir, in a pond—the real thing; none of your sixpenny box of toys with a magnet,—no, not a bit of it! No Soho Bazaar. Genuine wagglers, aren't they, Colonel?"

I corroborate his account again, but feel called upon to explain that the estate is not a park; that the garden has really to be made; that the whole place is in a very tumble-down condition.

"Yes, it wants a little figging up, but that's all." And so we go on with dinner and conversation: myself in the character of a large Landed Proprietor (all through Englemore's representation) with a stake in the country.

CHAPTER XXI.

FARM COTTAGE—NOOK'D—DOG—QUEER CHARACTERS—CARPENTER—
 RINGING IN—MASONS—GARDENER—STABLEMAN—PIG-HEADED—
 SWINEHERD—FOWLERS—LARKS—NOAH'S ARK—DARWINISM—
 FARMACOEPIA.



BRIGHTLY *Happy*
Thought.—Country
 Farm Cottage settled.
 I am now Mister
 Landed Proprietor.
 Four acres all my
 own. Intend to have
 board up with
 “Beware of the Dog.”
 By the way I must
 get a dog. Ought to
 have very savage
 one. Englemore says
 when he hears this,
 “Yes, get a sort of
 Mister Pincher.”
 Notice to Burglars—
 No Admittance.

It's a very lonely
 spot. No habitation

within a mile, or more, except a pot-house. Old woman who keeps the house tells me that they always lock up early in the winter. Why? Oh! she replies, “some queer characters about then.” “Queer characters,” sounds as if the lanes were filled with Guy Fawkeses.

I don't like this account of the place. Nothing was said on this subject *before* I took it. It was not so mentioned in the bond, I mean lease. The Landlord and his Solicitor—a Solicitor always appears when there's anything to sign—met me and my Solicitor

—and we really could have met one another without any legal assistance, being neither of us inclined to take the other at a disadvantage—and when I observed that Nook Farm was in rather a lonely situation, Englemore, also present as *amicus curiæ*, said, “So much the better—not overlooked. Don’t you see? Any little games in the garden, and no one to look out of Mister Second-floor Back and say, Hallo, Tommy!”

I admitted then, as did the Landlord and the two Solicitors, that this absence of an inquisitive and objectionable neighbour (as any one would be who called out to you, “Hallo, Tommy!” from an upper storey) was certainly an advantage.

“Exactly,” said Englemore, triumphantly; “then there you are.”

There was, evidently, nothing further to be said on the subject. The Landlord undertook all repairs, which accounts for my finding a carpenter in the house rattling door-handles, and working locks backwards and forwards, apparently trying to find out how little work he could do in the house without absolutely nullifying his contract with the Landlord.

I believe now, with my experience, that this crafty artificer took this opportunity of laying the foundation for many of my subsequent inconveniences. I write this after the event, and retrospectively. He had got, as the list for repairs worded it, “to make good” a lot of things, such as window-frames, sashes and fastenings, rollers for blinds, bells, locks, all stipulated for in detail, “to be done and finished in a proper and workmanlike manner.” What he “made good” I have never been exactly able to discover. My impression is that when he caught my eye, on any visit of inspection to see how things were getting on, he assumed “a proper and workmanlike manner,” as stated in the agreement: in fact, when I was looking on he was “making it good,” and when I wasn’t, he was “making it bad.”

How he must have smiled in his shirt-sleeve (having on no coat—a garment which he only adopted out-of-doors in unprofessional intervals) when, on taking possession, I expressed my unbounded delight and satisfaction with *all* the window-blinds, frames, sashes, and fastenings as aforesaid. How pleased I was (and he too—the villain!) when I found that I *could* lock and unlock a door (having expected difficulties in this line), and with

what a knowing air I remarked, that the bells seemed to go a trifle stiffly at first, "but," said Slyboots, the Carpenter, "they'll work easier in time;" and how I rang 'em all in turn, one after the other, as a "ringing in the new tenant"—which I fancy is some sort of ancient ceremony, as the name has quite a familiar sound, unless I am thinking of a Curate "reading himself in"—and perhaps I am. However, when Slyboots, the Carpenter, saw me so intent on the renovations, didn't he distract my attention by calling upon me to notice how he had repaired a skirting-board here, and another there, and how the front door could be bolted easily, and how he had made the back-door, which had previously caused much vexation and annoyance, now quite a pleasure to open and shut,—didn't he, I say, dilate upon all these improvements until I felt inclined to weep on his shoulder, and say, "You really have done too much—too much—I didn't expect it of you—bless you."—Bah! I *do* wish my Aunt had been at home. She would have had no romantic notions on the subject, but would have insisted upon examining *everything*, and wouldn't have let that Carpenter go until she'd worried him into "making good" everything, all round. He would have met his match.

Then there are, I notice on my visit, plasterers and masons all in league against me, but apparently setting to work with a will. They are all "making good," but not making better, which is, in reason, the spirit, though not the letter, of the Landlord's contract.

Next important matter is a Gardener and Stable-man. The query occurs, if I keep Mr. Pig, who's to look after him? The Gardener, or the Stable-man? In a book on farming I recollect seeing that there is a regular Pig-man kept, just as there is a Cow-herd for cows.

A propos of pigs, what a very obstinate person the "pig-headed Lady" must have been.

Happy Thought.—Swine-herd. Advertise for a Swine-herd:—"Wanted, in a Gentleman's family, a Swine-herd, who will have no objection to milking a cow." That's to say, "to save x's," as Englemore would phrase it, a Swine-herd who doesn't mind being a Cow-herd. Must keep two pigs at least; with power to add to their number.

This consideration leads to others. On whom are the various duties to fall?

For instance, Pigs? Well, to the Swine-herd. Cows? To the Cow-herd. Poultry to the Poulterer. Or, let me see—isn't it a Poultry-woman who looks after fowls? Fowls to the Fowler. [I suppose, though, that those costermongery looking sort of fellows who go out in the neighbourhood of London, with nets and cages for larks, are Fowlers. But larks are not fowls. Perhaps they used to be in old days. *Mem.* Ask Darwin.] I remember the title of some book which would be very serviceable just now; I fancy it was *The Little Poultry Woman's Guide*; only, I'm afraid it rather treated it as fun for children, and looked upon the poultry hutch as an amusing accessory to the doll's house.

Happy Thought.—The mention of Fowlers and Larks, *à propos* of farming, reminds me, suddenly, that, years ago, the faithful Herr von Joel used to give imitations of a farmyard, in which he certainly did introduce a lark (it was his *chef d'œuvre*, in fact, and concluded the entertainment), which was very much applauded by the country gentlemen who frequented Evans's in those good old days. So that, as those country gentlemen must have known what was correct in a farm-yard, isn't it likely that the Fowler who kept the poultry was also the man they employed to catch larks? (Don't see my way clearly in this, but more on this subject under "F., Farming, Fowling," in *Typical Developments*, Vol. XV., p. 22, Ch. VI. when I've leisure.)

Must write to Telford and two other country friends who farm, to know what is absolutely necessary. Pigs: say two to begin with. Poultry: two to begin with. Cows: well, here again, two to begin with. Stop!—

Happy Thought.—Why not two of everything to begin with?

On consideration, this sounds like copying Noah's Ark; and my Aunt, being strict on these points, mightn't like it when I tell her.

One thing is positively requisite—to make a list—to begin with. Two lists to begin with? Yes; one, and a copy. Good. Alphabetically; taking everything in order, and so see exactly what I want.

Commence List; heading it "Things Wanted for *Nook Farm and Dairy*. Alphabetically taken." Commence with (of course) "A." What does "A" stand for? Animals. Yes, true; but when I write animals it will include all the other letters of the alphabet at once. What can I put under "A"?

Happy Thought.—Ass. Must have a Donkey for cart . . . and generally so useful. Donkey will carry two baskets for little Uncles Jack and Gill, when they arrive, to ride about in. (N.B. Must send for J. and G. at once.) If I put Donkey under "A," what shall I have when I come to "D"? No, on consideration, keep Donkey for "D," and try something else for "A." Let's see . . . it must come in time; and these things aren't to be done in a hurry.

"A." Apes. No, not on a farm. (Might ask Darwin, though, whether there's any chance of their becoming Cows if fed properly.)

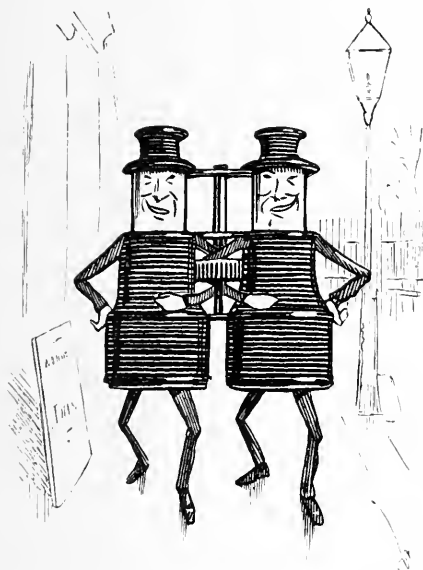
Happy Thought.—"A" for Aviary, and naturally enough "B" for Birds. There you are. By the way, though, what Birds? . . . "B" also stands for Bull. Dangerous thing to keep a Bull.

List so far. A for Aviary. B, Birds and Bull (with a query to Bull). C, evidently Cocks. It's quite a pity that "H" in this instance doesn't come next to "C." Better bracket them together. C. and H. Cocks and Hens. Now go back to D. D, Donkey. E, Eagles (?). No. Pass over E. F, Fowls. C and H though would be included under F. Begin again. A, Aviary. B, Birds. C (refer to F). D, Donkey. E (uncertain). F (refer to C and H). G, Gooseberry bushes, Greengages, Grass, &c. H (refer to F and C)—Cocks and Hens; also Hothouses; also *Horses*. Quite forgot Horses till this minute. "I," Implements. Must fill this list out; thinking it over carefully. At present I don't see anything until P, which stands for Pigs, Potatoes, Parsley, Pheasants, Plums, Pickles, Pears, Peacocks, Peas, &c., &c. Odd! Everything suddenly appears to begin with "P." Such a run on this letter. Shall end by spelling Farm—Pharm.

Happy Thought.—Compile a book on Farming to be called *The Modern Pharmacopœia* So much to begin with.

CHAPTER XXII.

NOOKING—PROVERB—NURSERY—GUTCH'S ARRANGEMENT—PACKET—
ENGLEMORE'S LETTER—BUNGAY'S LIST—IDEAS—VEGETABLES—
FAIRIES—PARSNIP.



MEM. Have sent for little Uncles Jack and Gill to come to the Nook. They are coming : like Christmas, and the Campbells, oh dear ! oh dear !

While Nooking I have lodged in town, and have run down every day to the Nook to see how things are getting on. Things don't get on very much. To expedite matters, I take on the old woman *pro tem*. till I get servants, and furnish my bedroom.

Happy Thought.—Household proverb. Furnish a Bed-room, the Dining-room will take care of itself.

No Gardener as yet. No Pony, no Pig, in fact, at present, nothing under the letter P. Happening to pass a Nurseryman's within three miles of the Nook, it occurs to me that I might hire a Gardener from this establishment. It chances that Mr. Gutch, the head man, is on the spot, at tea. I tell him that I want some Gardener—which sounds, after saying it, as if I'd gone to a grocer's and asked for some currants, and I seem naturally to expect the reply, "Some Gardener? Yes; how much?"—But Mr. Gutch doesn't take this view of it. He only eyes two geraniums in pots,

and rubs his unshaved chin with his right hand meditatively. Presently, he observes that he supposes I want some men to put my garden in order. I reply to this "Yes," and really it suddenly appears to me that I've been making quite a fuss about nothing. Mr. Gutch, still rubbing his chin, and consulting the wishes of the two geraniums—he evidently understands the language of flowers—wishes to know what sized garden mine may be? I am tempted, I own it, to magnify this to Gutch by mentioning the acreage of the entire estate. I do not, however, and limit my reply to about two acres, whereupon Mr. Gutch thinks that it would be better if his foreman came over to see it. Agreed. To-morrow. Time fixed. Business done. Exit myself. Gutch takes up the two geraniums fondly and carries them off with him to tea. End of scene between me and the Nursery Gardener.

On returning to Nook I find a packet containing two books, and a sort of invoice from Englemore :—

"Here you are : Two books, 'The Flower Garden, and How to Flower it ;' 'The Kitchen Garden, and how to Kitchen it.' Also Bungay's List : Sammy Seeds and how to sow him. I know an Amateur farmer and stockbroker all in one. Bulls on change, Cows in the Country. Introduce him ? Wire back to

"Your Little

"ENGLEMORE."

Will drive into the books on my return. Bungay's List looks attractive on the outside, there being a coat-of-arms—Bungay's perhaps—and the pictures of two Exhibition medals, gained by Bungay for turnips, or something in that line.

I notice at a cursory and superficial glance that the List is illustrated, and that Bungay has treated his plants and vegetables as if they were his children, giving them all his name. For instance, under the letter A. (for Bungay goes in on my plan, I am glad to see, of alphabetical order, which, as he is a great professional Gardener, and I'm only beginning, is flattering to my instincts,) he begins with—

ASPARAGUS.—Bungay's Improved Purple-Topped (Prize, 1860).

BEANS.—The Bungay ; The Ornamental Bungay's Own ; The Improved Wanderer (Bungay).

BEET.—Bungay's Giant Egyptian Blue ; Bungay's Miniature Turnip ; King of the Bungay's (Prize, 1862. Birmingham).

BROCCOLI.—Bungay's Chinese Hybrid.

CUCUMBER.—Bungay's Mammoth Snowball; The Hero (Bungay); Quooly Snu Bungay's Milky Chinese; Swiss Bungay's Early Scarlet.

CABBAGE.—Bungay's Incomparable Nosebag; Bungay's Prolific Climax (Prize, 1861. London).

Some great subjects, evidently begging verbal description, require pictorial explanation, as I notice is the case with *Bungay's Speckled Negro*, which occupies a whole page, representing beans all a-growing and a-blowing. Then the *Purple-Podded Wonder* (some relation, I fancy, to the *Negro* just mentioned) is described, under a picture of itself, as "a very heavy cropper."

Happy Thought.—Mem. for the hunting-field. Instead of saying to a fellow who has come head first over a nasty place, "You've come a very heavy cropper," a man with a taste for gardening would say, "Hallo! You've come quite a Purple-podded Wonder, eh?"

"*Bungay's Champion*" next described on his list, is, odd to say, "a Runner." Sounds more like a Coward than a Champion. Bungay is a man of exuberant fancy, and you might almost imagine he'd compiled his list as a Christmas book for children, so full is it of Heroes (Peas), Champions (Broccoli), Dwarfs (Parsnips), Giants (Cucumbers), Mammoths (Turnips), Kings (of Potatoes), Queens (of Marrows), Princes (of Spanish Onions), Princesses (Beet), Emperors (Leeks), Golden Globes (Tomatoes), the Niagara Squash Pumpkins for *Cinderella*, Romantic Russian (Radish), and Long-Podded Negroes.

Happy Thought.—Write a Vegetable Christmas Fairy Book for Vegetarian Children.

Among the Flowers I have, I see, a surprising choice. Here's the *Warscewiczii* (uncommonly like the *vice versy*), the *Aquilegia Caryophylloides*, the *Chamaepena diacantha* (known in English as "Bungay's Fishbone Thistle"), the *Major Convolvulus*, which reminds me of Englemore, who would, however, have probably called it "Colonel;" and finally, as I haven't time at present to note any others, the *Heracleum giganteum*, or "Bungay's Cow Parsnip," "*effective*" (he adds, in italics) "*in shrubberies.*" I

should think so. Rather. A strange creature, which is something between a Cow and a Parsnip would be effective in a shrubbery: and a jolly mess he'd make of it. Which part of it would be a Cow, and which Parsnip? Important question, on account of the milk.

The above I've noted while training up to town.

Happy Thought.—Proverb for Stokers,—Train up to town in the way you should go, and then there won't be an accident.

Meet Englemore just stepping into a cab. He's in a hurry. Off for Mister Furniture. Why this impetuosity, I ask; is it true he is going to be married? He winks and laughs knowingly as he replies on the step of the Hansom, and confidentially, as it were, between me and the cabman, "Little Tommy Wedding, eh? Cake for two, Colonel. You'll see. All right,"—to Cabman, "drive on." Then hurriedly out of window, as if he'd remembered something most important at the last moment, and emphasising it with his umbrella, "Five minutes with you . . . Mr. Farmer, and . . ." the rest is lost.

Let me see. Next point is to advertise for Gardener.



CHAPTER XXIII.

ADVERTISING—TELFORD—HENS—PIGS—COW—PONY—DOG—PRECEDENTS—MORE ADVERTISEMENTS—MY AUNT'S PLAN—SETTLING IT—DUTCHMAN—WATCH AND WAIT—ALL ALIVE—ENTERING THE LISTS—*GUTCH, LE VOICI!*



HAPPY THOUGHT.

In advertising for Gardener, think him out well first, so that there shall be no mistake afterwards. The question is, what do I want him to do, or, rather, first and foremost, what am I going to have for him to do? To save "x's," I should wish a man to combine certain offices.

Telford writes to ask me would I like some Hens? Yes, certainly. Pundley, Telford's farming friend, can give me

a Duck or two, and can sell me a Pig. Pundley lives in the south of Cornwall, twelve miles from any railway station. If I'll have the pig and ducks he wants to know will I come and fetch 'em, or how.

Suppose I close with Pundley's offer, then with Cow, I've got Ducks, Hens, and Pigs. That's what I shall have for a Gardener to do. As the lodging-house keepers say, he'll have to do for two Ducks (or more), Hens uncertain, and a Pig.

The question is, how to word this properly in an advertisement. "Wanted, a Gardener, who has no objection to a Pig." That, I think, is the regular, and really the pleasantest way of putting

it : then, to vary it a little, add, "And who can get on with a Cow."

Happy Thought.—Title for a song, "Who can get on with a Cow?"

In enumerating the above animals, I've quite forgotten the Pony. By the way, must purchase Pony. Also, no farmyard complete without a Dog. Begins to sound as if I were setting up a Noah's Ark.

Note. Odd. The other day, when making an alphabetical list of what I should require, I found that with quite a rush everything came suddenly under the letter "P;" now there's a run upon "D"—as, for instance, Dog, Ducks, Donkey.

Happy Thought.—Look in paper for how to word properly an advertisement. Search out precedents.

Look down column. Where are the Gardeners who want Employers, or where are the Employers who want Gardeners.

The first I come across is, "*To Master Bread and Biscuit Bakers.*" Reminding me of Englemore at once. Master Bread and Biscuit. On again. Where are Gardeners' advertisements? Next? No. *A Single-handed Nurse*, &c. By the way, not much use where there are twins.

Now then Gardener, where are you? . . . The next that catches my eye is, "*A Valet who only requires a nominal salary.*" This sets me thinking. Substitute Gardener for Valet, and wouldn't that suit my pocket? "Only a Nominal Salary." Might be fourpence a year. Still if proposal comes from *him*, he can't complain. I'll read this advertisement on to the end. It continues as a reason for the nominal salary, "*not having been out before.*" Now would this do for a Gardener? Let me suppose that I should find this form :—

"*A Gardener who only requires a nominal salary, never having attended to a Garden in his life, and utterly ignorant of Pigs and Cows, wishes for a situation. Good references.*"

Now what should I do? He'd be cheap, that's certain, as far as wages go. But his references? What character could they give him, except to corroborate his own statement that he "never had attended to a garden," and that he was, as he stated, utterly

ignorant of pigs, and knew just as little about cows. Such a reference would be unsatisfactory ; and, after all, if they only said he didn't drink and was honest, wouldn't it be tantamount to describing him as a moral and sober idiot ?

On the other hand, I remember my Aunt, who is really an experienced person, distinctly saying, that in choosing servants, she would rather have one at low wages (a Cook for example) whom she herself could teach, and who would do what she (my Aunt) told her, without attempting to instruct *her*, than an elderly scientific professed or Plain Cook, whose only thought was, out of her materials at hand to make as little as possible for the dining-room, and as much as possible for her own private purse.

Then how did my Aunt instruct her ? Why by supervision, and out of a good cookery-book. Now, I ask myself seriously, what's the use of my having learned to read and write, and of having gone through the grades of a superior education, if I can't study, day by day, the gardening work, so as to instruct a Gardener, and then see him carry out my orders under my own eye ? True, I shall have to devote my time to it at first—but at first only ; and, after awhile, I shall from my own personal experience, be able to publish a useful volume on Farming (the *Pharmacopœia* before mentioned in these Notes), and Gardening, with an essay on Pigs, Poultry, Peas, &c.

On the whole, I am inclined to advertise as follows, compounding my advertisement out of what I see wanted, so that thus I may get a thoroughly useful man, whom I could form myself. Besides, Gutch's gardeners will start the affair, just putting things straight.

My Advertisement, as planned :—

“WANTED,—A thorough out-of-door Servant, not less than twenty-five years of age, with good personal character and references, single, active, and English——”

I mention this to exclude foreigners ; and yet, when I think of it, the Dutch are great Gardeners.

Happy Thought. Might, with a Dutch gardener, win a prize in Dutch Tulips. Imitate the Bungay style, and call it the Giant Emperor Nook Conquering Hero Tulip, or Imperator Victor Nookensis.

Continue advertisement, thus: Single—(it wouldn't do to have a Double-Dutchman)—*active, English, or Dutch. Height no object.*

No, on second thoughts, omit this, or limit it, say, to six feet one. Over six feet one no giant need apply. I can't say height no object when, if he were seven feet, he would be an object—and a tremendous object.

Happy Thought.—But then I could exhibit him. Place him among the tulips, and call him the *Géant Jardinier Hollandais au Coin—au coin* looks as if he'd been placed in a corner for punishment, but it really means the Nook. Translation of the whole, The Giant Dutch Gardener in the Nook. Or, if only four feet high, *Homunculus Horticulturisticus Nookensis.*

Advertisement continued.—“*Middle Height. One who requires a nominal salary only much preferred. If he has never been out before, he will be instructed on the premises, he must know something—*”

I don't want him to be an absolute fool—

——“*of Pigs, Poultry (including Ducks), and a Pony, and must not object to a Cow.*”

The Cow may object to him, if he doesn't know his business, when he comes to milk ; but that's his look-out, and he'll have to look out pretty sharply too, because a Cow kicks sideways, I believe.

“*Apply, Nook Farm Dairy, or to X., at the Minerva Club, between Two and Four.*”

“X.,” at the Minerva Club, is myself ; and I send the Messenger down to the newspaper with this advertisement. Anxious to see what comes of it. Watch and Wait : Motto.

On first opportunity must be introduced to Englemore's stock-broker who farms.

While watching and waiting, I run down to the Nook, to see how things generally are getting on, and to meet Mr. Gutch on the subject of preparations for Garden.

The world of Nurserymen and Seedsmen seems to have awoken to the fact of my being about to start a Garden. I am inundated with *Season Catalogues* (Cagmer's), *Bodger's Annual*, *Mumpkin's Spring List*, *Wuggum & Co.'s Seed and Vegetable List*, *The Royal Bucks Nursery Garden Book*, issued by Hullaby and Sons, with form of order enclosed—so thoughtful this of Hullaby and Sons !—

and, finally, Bungay over again, who has sprouted out so wonderfully into all sorts of Lists, Guides, Prospectuses, and illustrated Garden Books, that I am inclined to think he is somehow connected with the printing interest. If not, the cost alone to Bungay of employing Vegetable Authors for the literary part of his (Bungay's) publications, and of fruit, vegetable, and flower artists for the illustrations, must be something enormous. Evidently, a man whose *spécialité* is vegetables, is required, and yet what draughtsman's while can it be worth to injure his health by sitting out all day copying peculiar parsnips and odd carrots, besides seriously damaging his constitution by changing the atmosphere, suddenly, from out-of-doors chill and damp, to the tropical climate of a hothouse, where he would sketch Bungay's *Early Glory* (Strawberry) or his *Golden Intermediate* (Grape).

This leads me into the subject of Fruit. It strikes me that Gardening is certainly an occupation, and with Farming is clearly uncommonly like a business. O, here's Mr. Gutch!



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOREMAN—SAD—OBSERVATION—ADVICE—PROPOSITION—ONLY A
CLOD—DISGUST—SCUTCH AND GUTCH—BUSHES—TREES—WON-
DERFUL NAMES—NEW FLOWERS—OFF AGAIN.



AS MR. GUTCH is unable to come himself, he has sent his Foreman, or Head Gardener.

He is of a despondent turn, and appears to view any difficulty as almost insurmountable. Occasionally he omits his aspirates, and occasionally reinserts them, in their wrong places, so as to do justice to the letter "H" in his conversation.

The moment he sees the Nook, he looks round as if he were taking in the whole four acres at a glance, and shakes his head without saying a word. He has such a melancholy air that I almost expect he will shed tears, beg me not to speak to him, and walk out of the front gate, with his handkerchief up to his eyes, distractedly.

He doesn't go so far as this, however. He simply observes, "It's in a bad state, Sir," which is, I admit at once, true ; adding, hopefully, that "I'm sure we can make something of it."

To this he replies, "To do any good with it will be a difficult job. Why," he goes on, "I suppose this place hain't been touched not by no one for a matter of two year or more."

I believe him to be right, in everything, except grammar and aspirates.

"Now," he asks me, after looking round again, and rubbing his chin, and sniffing, "what are you going to make of this, Sir?"

That, I tell him, is precisely what I was about to ask *him*.

"Flower and Kitchen, I s'pose," he says, eyeing the extent of ground, and communing with himself.

"Certainly," I answer ; "with pigs and a cow."

We walk on a little. He seems too oppressed by the utter hopelessness of the situation to say a word. Can't make out what he expected to find here. If the place had been perfect, I shouldn't have appealed to Gutch, and Gutch wouldn't have had to send his Foreman.

He walks on silently. Presently he stops, and takes up a lump of earth.

"It'll be a long time afore we can do anything with *this*," he says, as if he had been called upon to cook and eat it.

If left to myself, of course it would be a very long time before I could make anything of this clod of earth. However, in order to draw him out, and hear what he *has* got to say on the subject (because if he's got nothing to say on the subject, I'd better give up the house, grounds, and the whole scheme at once), I preten also to take a desponding view of the clod, and we both shake our heads over it.

"Heavy clay !" he goes on. "No doing nothing with it for a long time. 'Tain't like a light soil, or a rich loamy soil"—— Here he weighs it on his hand, surveying it with ineffable disgust, and then, appealing to me, says, "Look 'ere, Sir ! What are you to do with *that* ? It's 'artbreaking work, it is !"

And he throws down the clod, as if reproaching me with having chosen such a Heaven-forsaken spot, and having trifled with his professional feelings as a Gardener in bringing him to see it.

"Isn't it good for growing things in?" I ask vaguely, and diffidently. The truth is, that I begin to wish I'd never gone in for the Nook, or, rather, that, at all events, Englemore hadn't been so hasty in the matter.

"Well," says Mr. Gutch's Head Gardener, putting his wide-awake hat on one side of his head, and scratching the other side deliberately with his right hand,—“well, we might work it so as it *may* come pretty right and do fairly”—this is a great admission for him, and I quite brighten up again: after all, the Nook's a nice place; “only o' course it'll be four men's time, at least, to break up the earth.” Here he stoops down and brings up another lump, with what appears to me to be straw sticking in it. Holding this up for my inspection, he says, “Why it'll be a goodish time afore we get this Scutch out. I see,” he goes on, with another comprehensive look round and about, “the Scutch is everywhere. You don't get *that* out easily.”

This last observation he makes with a knowing look at me, which, in itself, is rather flattering to my experience of horticulture, as it implies that I am perfectly well acquainted with the difficulties of dealing with Scutch (of which I have never heard till this minute, and which sounds at first like Smutch), and that in consequence as he, the Head Gardener, wouldn't think of deceiving me, so I mustn't dream of trying to humbug him.

“Digging,” he proceeds, “and plenty of manuring. It'll stand a deal o' that when the Scutch is once out, or else it'll lose 'art.”

I should be sorry, I say, if it did that, and it shall have any amount of manure that may be necessary.

“Half-a-dozen cartloads,” says Mr. Gutch's Foreman.

“Certainly; as much as you like,” I reply, heartily, in a spirit, as it were, of the true old English Country Gentleman's hospitality. Let Gutch's Foreman make himself quite at home.

“We'll get rid of the Smutch,” I say decidedly. It's the first time I've tried the word, and I pronounce it boldly.

“The Scutch, Sir?” he inquires.

“Yes,” I reply; and then, as if to be quite certain we mean the same, I point to it in the clod, and ask, “what do *you* call it?”

“Scutch,” he answers; “but they 'a hother names for it in different counties. P'r'aps, Sir, you've 'eard it called somethin' else.”

Very possibly : certainly never Scutch.

Happy Thought (poetical).—

But Mr. Gutch
Will stop the Scutch.

*Happy Thought (practical and prosaic).—*Four men will do it all. How much ?

The Foreman can't exactly say, but Mr. Gutch will write to me on the subject. I shall then want some bushes, he supposes.

"Yes, of course, bushes," I answer. I thought bushes grew, and took years to do it. I had no idea until this moment, that you could buy your bushes ready made, and stick 'em in.

"And trees," he goes on.

"Well," I reply, doubtfully, not liking him to think that I shall yield to every one of his suggestions, "I don't know."

*Happy Thought.—*What trees !

The Foreman replies, "Well, mainly, young 'uns has'll look well. Fruit-trees for the wall, hand in the front, by the walk there, you can't do better than 'ave a *hoak*, a *hash*, or a *helm*."

Is he going to make a park of it ? I really don't think he understands that I only want this place to be a small Farm-garden or Garden-farm.

"Then," he continues, "you'll have the front laid out in flower-beds, o' course."

Now he has mentioned it, I see, for the first time, that this must have all along been my original design.

"You'll want a few 'ardy plants for bedding out, and quick climbers and some roses, o' course."

*Happy Thought.—*Beds of roses. By all means. There are various sorts of roses, I believe ; what does he recommend ?

"Well," he returns slowly, "there's the Glory of Die John, a very nice 'un ; then there's Sellin Forester as 'ud come in well ; and Madame Bosankett is a good 'un to creep. Bulldy Nige would look well, a John Chirping, a President Lincoln, and a Raindy Botes. You can't do better, too, for making a show, than a Hollibo, a Rolison, and a Tirer 'Ammyrick."

"All roses ?" I ask.

"All the best sorts as is growd," he replies. "Then there's Werbeeners. You'd like Werbeeners?"

"Certainly," I answer. "Verbenas, by all means." He really seems to forget that I'm arranging for a small Garden-farm, not a Botanical Show-place.

"For Werbeeners," he continues, "there's Charles Squedgeley with a cherry centre, and Mr. Pinto, and Miss Pinto, pale flesh and nearly white she is, but they're more for exhibiting. Then, s'pose you 'ad a goodish few Simnuariers. There's Renton's Miss Jones, white and rosy, and Lord Wezzlemore, yellow, profusely covered with small reddish-brown spots—no, that there's a Calso-larier, though—and there'd be a place for a lean-to house by the wall yonder."

Happy Thought.—A "lean-to house" must be a sort of Tower of Pisa on the Premises.

I really don't understand what Gutch's Foreman thinks I want to make of the place. He has partially recovered from his despondency, and notes down that I shall require four men, plants, bushes, and trees. Will I have a flower list, in which I can mark anything that may strike my fancy? I thank him, and accept. He is off.

When he's gone, I examine the catalogue, and am quite taken at first with the long names. I mark off in pencil the *Philodendrammedonensis Bipinnatifinicatifidum*, which sounds like something between an antediluvian monster and the chorus of a comic song: then a *Sericotelinelladocalyx floribifolia splendensis*, which must be quite a firework of a flower, with pop-bang to finish with.

Happy Thought.—A flower with a pop-bang shoot.

Under *Azaleas*, I select *Baron Baywig*, fine form, with scarlet spot; *Duke of Cambridge*, rosy carmine; *Martha Spry*, richly spotted with crimson on the top lobe; *The Inimitable Sambo* (one of Bungay's, I find), covered with small crimson red specks, and of a profuse flowering habit; and, as something satisfactory to finish with, *Lady Candlish* (Improved).

Up to town, to find answers from Gardeners addressed to "X." at Minerva Club.

CHAPTER XXV.

GARDENERS ON VIEW—THE CLUB—DIFFICULTIES—ENGLEMORE'S LETTER—THE COMMITTEE'S REMONSTRANCE—THE DEPUTATION—SOLO AND CHORUS—OLD MEMBER—ADJOURNMENT MOVED—ROOMS—JUKE STREET—INTERVIEWS—EXAMINATION CONTINUING.



HOPE to meet Englemore at the Minerva Club.

Arrive at Club. Annoyed at finding the steps thronged by a crowd of respectable-looking artisans. At least, some appear to be artisans in their Sunday best, with a variety of neat things in hats, and others present a sort of groom-out-of-place appearance, specially about the trousers, which are clearly perquisites of the past adapted to straitened circumstances.

Happy Thought.—Evidently something to do with the Strikes. Perhaps a Deputation to call on one of the members. If so, shall complain of it to the Committee as a nuisance.

In the hall, more of the deputation, without their hats. Tall and healthy, tall and unhealthy, short and thin, short and fat—in fact, all sorts and sizes, with a hungry, restless look about them, and an indescribable awkwardness of hands and feet, as if the disappearance of both would be an intense relief to them.

“Any letters?” I ask the Hall-Porter.

"One, Sir," he answers, and presents me with what I knew at once to be a trifle from Englemore. He says:—

"Saw your advertisement. Good. Have pushed it about. Wired country friends to send up to 'X., Minerva Club.' Personal interview saves trouble. Hatfuls of Gardeners. Pick and try. Look here. Going to have Mister Housewarming. Theatricals. Peter Playacting. Put you down for part. Larks. Got Major Sideboard at last. Quite a G. B. for L. s. d. down. Took off Daniel Discount ten. That's good enough for your

"LITTLE ENGLEMORE.

"P.S. Heard of Mister Pig just suit you. At least he won't suit anybody else, so you might get him cheap. Wire 'Yes,' if pig or not.

P.P.S. Hope you'll like the Jolly Gardeners sent to order. Love to 'X., Minerva.'"

At first I don't quite understand. Another second clears up the difficulty. I must ask about answers to advertisement.

"Any letters addressed to 'X.' here?"

The Hall-Porter draws a deep sigh. "O," he says, "it's for you, Sir, is it?" Whereupon he produces a packet of about fifty, and as he does so, I notice the simultaneous shuffling of the members of the deputation in the hall. There is a confused murmur which sounds like "It's him!" in a variety of undertones.

The Hall-Porter continues: "Yes, Sir, besides these here" (meaning the letters), "there's been all these men waiting for you yesterday, Sir, and to-day."

"What, these for *me*?" The deputation!! I look round. They are all bowing and scraping; and the others outside, having guessed instinctively the cause of the commotion, are now coming up the steps, and entering the Club.

"There 'ave been complaints made by the members, Sir, last night, and I was to hand you this from the Committee, Sir. (Here he produces an official-looking document. It contains a warning—a reproof—and necessitates an explanation.)

Other members coming in, pass ill-natured remarks. What am I to do? The men are all bending and smirking. A very tall one, with a deep voice, "presumes that he is speaking to Mr. X."

Happy Thought.—Like Stanley finding Livingstone. “Mr. X., I presume?”

I am obliged to admit that his presumption is correct. Dr. Livingstone restrained himself, and did not rush into Mr. Stanley's arms. I, too, restrain myself. I don't at the instant exactly see what to say. Hall-Porter looking on. Members in the distance watching, with a view to reporting the whole proceeding to the Committee.

“Yes,” I say, “I am ‘X.’ Why?”

Epigrammatic, but, on reconsideration, unbusiness-like. The applicants smile—all except the gloomy tall man (six feet two, and I won't have *him*, I settle that at once), who, in answer to my question why he hadn't written instead of coming in this manner, says, “I thought as a personal happlication were better as savin' time on both parties which might be himportant to hall.” The same idea has occurred to all of them, for they all nod, and more or less express themselves like a chorus in an opera, with the long man and myself doing the two solos. The long man continues, gravely, “I come 'ere yesterday, d'reckly as I see your hadvertise-ment.” Chorus gesticulate again, just as if they were singing, “And so say all of us,” without the previous portion of the tune which celebrates the joviality of the individual.

“I've honly left my present place, account of the family going abroad and 'aving no more use for a gard'ner.” Chorus evidently don't believe in him a bit. The tall Gardener goes on again with further particulars. I am not listening to him, but thinking how I shall get rid of them all. I hear him saying, “I'm a married man, and my wife can cook or make herself otherwise useful in a house,” and I am on the point of dismissing him to begin with, when the oldest member of the Club enters the hall, and wishes to know what all this disturbance is?

The Hall-Porter looks appealingly to me. I beg to offer an explanation. The iraseible old man won't be pacified. “It's a mob, Sir!” he says, and I feel that I agree with him. I show him how the mistake arose on their part from the unfortunate wording of my advertisement.

“It's too bad, Sir; 'pon my word, it's too bad,” the old member blurts out. “And if this sort of thing's allowed, we shan't be

able to keep an umbrella in the Club," whereupon he steams off through a glass door, and puffs himself into the writing-room, where he allows some of his heat to evaporate in an effervescing draught of a letter to the Committee.

Happy Thought.—Tell the frozen-out Gardeners to meet me in St. James's Park. On consideration, this might be taken for a Republican Demonstration.

Hall-Porter asks, if I couldn't get some gentleman's rooms to see 'em in?

Happy Thought.—Of course. Englemore's! His old lodgings. Through the tall man, whom I treat as the spokesman, I request the applicants to walk round to Juke Street. They reply through him that they don't know where Juke Street is, and exhibit incredulity as to my intention of ever seeing them again.

Happy Thought.—Direct Club Commissionnaire to guide them. Intrust him with half a sovereign to be divided among them in liquor at the nearest tavern.

Exeunt Omnes.—Thank Heaven!

If Englemore sent most of these fellows up, or got his friends to do so, I must have a row with him; at all events he shall have the benefit of them in his rooms, if possible.

It is possible. Mrs. Dumper, Englemore's landlady, knows me, but though "Mr. Englemore is giving up, yet she is doubtful whether"—In fact, she is hesitating, though she has not seen my crowd, who are still in the public-house, and I have only requested to be allowed the use of his sitting-room, just for half an hour, merely to see some gardeners who have called about my place. She is not in the least interested, and demurs.

Happy Thought.—I say to Mrs. Dumper, "I fancy that Mr. Englemore's rooms would suit me; because I shan't live in the country altogether."

"Well, Sir," she says, seeing her way to a tenant, "you can look at 'em now, and if you like to use them for 'arf an 'our or so there won't be any great 'arm done, I dessay."

I take my seat at Englemore's table, after calling to the Commissionnaire to bring the men up here. Quite Magisterial.

The gloomy man, who has been making himself gloomier than ever with beer, I dismiss at once. He is so utterly taken by surprise that he has nothing to say for himself; and every one else's interests being dead against him, nobody has anything to say for him, and so there's an end of him. He's a weight off my mind. I'm sorry he hasn't obtained the situation, but he has incumbrances, and holds such views on pigs, poultry, and a cow, as are utterly irreconcilable with mine.

Number Two.—Is an unhealthy-looking person with weak knees. He says he understands glass. Whatever else he doesn't understand, one thing he sticks to, and that is—Glass. I tell him I haven't got any glass, that I don't intend to have any glass, and that—to put it forcibly—I hate glass. At this last blow, he staggers from the room and disappears. With him go three others who had come there solely on the strength of their knowledge of Glass.

Number Three.—Muddy-faced, short man; groomy style in gaiters. His eyes seem inclined to blink. He bobs at me with his front lock, and attempting to focus his gaze on the top button of my waistcoat, awaits my questioning.

“What can you do?”

Directly I have spoken, his eyes begin to wander. Perhaps he is trying to recall all his accomplishments.

“Well, Sir,” he presently answers, with rather a silly kind of laugh, “a good deal depends on what you may want.”

I admit that a good deal does depend on it. Referring to my notes of what to ask applicants, I find briefly, “to inquire (a) Can he Pig? (b) ditto Cow, (c) Ducks, (d) Poultry, (e) Farm?” Also, N.B. and special, “Can he Pony?”

“Single-handed?” he asks, fixing his gaze on the button where he had previously been so successful.

“I don't quite understand,” I say.

His eye wanders, and he speaks very carefully, as if weighing every word, and finding them all uncommonly heavy.

“My meaning is—as do you—keep another man—or——” here vagueness seems to seize him suddenly, but he tries my top button again, and finishes with—“or all this—for—one?” Then he frowns.

"For one," I answer.

He won't let that top button out of his sight for an instant now

"With—occashnal 'elp?" he asks ; then adds, while allowing his features to relax into what he intends to be a persuasive smile, "You'd have occashnal 'elp, I s'pose, Sir. Cos you see, Sir," he goes on, his tone becoming almost pathetic, "a pig, a cow, a pony, and what not besides, is more than one man's time singl'anded."

On deliberation, I concede a boy now and then. He shakes his head over it. "Very sorry, but he don't think as it'll do, and he don't think as I'll get anyone, who ain't not quite starving, for such work as this."

He is suddenly changing his manner to impertinence. It breaks upon me all at once—he is drunk and impertinent.

This decides me. He may withdraw. He lingers. He ought, he says, to have his expenses for coming up on such a fool's errand. I can't hear of such a thing.

"Can't hear?" he suddenly exclaims, becoming quite violent and offensive, "Who's you, to send for poor 'ard-workin' men up 'ere, trepannin' them up for nothing? Darn you an' your pigs and your cows! Why, I'd be above offrin' a respekable man such a place as yourn, and if there's law in this land, I'll——"

Here a decent-looking woman rushes into the room, and seizes him. "John," she says, "you're spoilin' your chances ; don't be a fool." He looks sullenly at her, as if he'd like to argue this point. But she continues to me : "He took something next door, being a temperans gen'ally, as went against him, and he ain't quite hisself just now."

Fortunately, she is able, with the assistance of a friend or two outside, to get him away before he is less and less himself, as he is every moment becoming, and so rapidly that who he'll be when he reaches the front door, and gets out into the cold air, it will be difficult to determine.

Examination continues.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STILL IN JUKE STREET—FIXING A GARDENER—OBLIGING—THE DUKE
—THE MIKADO—JAPANESE IDEA FOR SHILLING MANUALS—
GOOSEBERRIES—RATS—BEES—BEDDING OUT.



EXAMINATION for place of Gardener finished. I fix on one man. He has no objection to anything. Pigs he's at home with, he says, and Cows are rather a pleasure to him than a trouble. Flowers he understands as well, he tells me, as he does fruit and vegetables. Stable-work and pony are a mere joke to this handy person, on his own showing. Evidently the very man for me. Before settling finally, he looks up with a chirrupy sort of a smile,—he is a fair-haired man, by the way, with a

fresh countrified looking face, reminding me, on the whole, of the description in the old song, of the Flaxen-headed Ploughboy.

Happy Thought.—

The Flaxen-headed Ploughboy
Comes whistling o'er the Lea ;
To those who don't like whistling
A nuisance he must be.

However, he looks up with this particularly chirrupy sort of smile, and says:—

"If you wanted a married person, Sir,—"

"You're *not* married, though?" I ask.

"No, Sir; but if it so chanced as you did want a married man, I could come married."

I never knew a servant so accommodating. I really feel that it won't do to presume upon this willingness to too great an extent. I reply, therefore, that I should prefer him single, not having anything for a wife to do; unless, perhaps, my Aunt, when she arrives, could find her some employment.

He touches his hat, and observes respectfully,—

"As you please, Sir; it's all one to me. My object is to make all things comfortable for all parties, and give satisfaction."

Happy Thought.—Ask for his character.

He will give me the address of his last place, and, if I will have the goodness to write to the Duke of Shetland, I shall find that His Grace will be able to speak of him in terms which, he trusts, will corroborate his own account; and, should this not be sufficient, an application to His Serene Highness The Mikado will establish his claims to being a first-rate professional Gardener in all sorts of fancy lines.

At first it strikes me that he is joking. This is so improbable, and he is so serious withal, and so pleasant and cheerful about it, that in an off-hand manner, as if correspondence with Mikados and Dukes was among my daily routine of letter-writing, I signify that, if I find after a month's trial he should suit me, I would then write to his former employers for testimonials.

Happy Thought.—In order to avoid mistakes, I ask him, as he is withdrawing, whether he really means the Mikado, or has made a mistake in the name?

He draws himself up with some dignity, and replies, "I am not likely, Sir, to have made any mistake. The Mikado has done more for me than any other nobleman or gentleman living, and I am bound to say, Sir—" (here he is absolutely becoming affected almost to tears)—"I am bound to say, Sir, that, but for him and the Duke of Shetland, who gave me the first cuttings of the *Hortensis floreatus*, I should never have known an hour's happiness."

He does not appear at all inclined to stop at this point, but has evidently much more to say, which I nip in the bud,

Happy Thought.—Gardening simile appropriate. That this should occur to me is a cheering sign, as it shows that my mind is gradually being given to the subject. Can't do anything with any subject, no matter how trifling, unless you give your mind to it.

I nip him in the bud, and he bows himself out. I fancy I hear him sobbing on the stairs. If so, he must be as tender as one of his own young plants. Odd about the Mikado! Perhaps he got into his service on purpose to learn something about Japanese Gardening; and *that* is what he has been alluding to as fancy-work. Might hear of some operations in Japanese Stocks at 9 per cent. But this is not to the point. Now to other business.

Mem.—Aunt returns from Aix day after to-morrow, thoroughly galvanised.

Mem.—Little Uncles, Jack and Gill, from the sea-side with Nurse.

Mem.—The Nook, Nookside, sufficiently furnished for habitation.

Mem.—Gutch's men at work on Nook ground.

Mem.—Cow, Pig, Pony, still unbought. Do it all in a lump. Queer sort of lump—a Cow, a Pig, and a Pony.

Write to Englemore. Inform him of my having settled with Gardener. Tell him that, "under the cires," I haven't time for theatricals, or would be very happy to join him in his house-warming, and will he *at once* introduce me to the Gardening and Farming Stockbroker whom he mentioned?

Letter sent by hand.

Happy Thought.—While waiting for answer, go to bookseller's and buy Shilling Manuals on farms, flowers, &c.; *The Little Flower Gardener*, *Every Man his Own Seedsman*, *Hints for Horticulturists*, *The Little Poultrywoman's Guide*, also *The Economical Vegetable Book*.

Happy Thought.—"The Economical." Hope this'll keep the Mikado's young man in cheek.

Anecdotes of the Rat.—Perhaps hardly necessary—and yet, in

an old place—not in the house, of course (for if they are in, I'm out, that's all), but in the stable there might be rats.

Gossips on Gooseberries, including a treatise on fruit-growing generally and the cultivation of the Grape. I must have a work on Pigs.

Happy Thought.—Write one (after experience) myself. Title, *Kill and Cure: being a Scientific treatise on Pigs. A Baconian Essay*.

I hit upon one work then which I decide to buy, before all others: *The Bee, its Habits, &c.*

Happy Thought.—This is a brilliant idea. It strikes me as Englemore, by way of answering my letter, comes himself in a cab. I say, impetuously, to him, "Look here. I've settled what I'll do. I'll keep Bees."

"First-rate thing—Mr. Bee," is his reply. "Put him under little Harry Hive, and then run away as hard as you can."

"I shall buy a book on the subject."

"That's it," he returns, at once quite taking the idea, but in his own way. "Book for Bee, B for Book. *The Bee and how to avoid Him*, I know. Once get accustomed to them and they mean £ s. d. Getting accustomed to 'em is rather a bore tho'," he goes on, as if he knew something about it; "because you have to live with your head in a bag for a week and your hands in mufflers, something between the diver at the Polytechnic and a prize-fighter with boxing-gloves; because when they don't know you Mister Bee will sting Colonel Stranger all over. The Honey's good enough for your little Englemore, without Mister Bee."

This rather discourages me. Now about his Gardening Stockbroker. Can I see him, and get some hints?

"All right, Colonel," he replies. "He's gone home, and you're to come. Pack up Captain Carpet-bag and little Tommy Toothbrush, that's all."

I see, we're to stay the night, eh? Englemore winks slyly and answers, "All among the barley. Twenty miles away. Train down. Daniel Dinner, Peter Port. If you're waking call me

early, Mother dear, without a headache. Major Ozone on the premises."

I accept, make ready, and am off with him.

Happy Thought (still in the Gardening vein).—I'm going to be "bedded out."



CHAPTER XXVII.

MICKLETON'S SHAY—CHEZ MICKLETON—THE PROFESSOR—CHICKA-BIDDIES—COUNTRY AND TOWN—NOTIONS—THINKING IT OUT—CUCKOO—BRIEF DESCRIPTION—RIDDLE.



DOG-CART at the Station to receive us. Foggy drive.

We arrive at Mr. Mickleton's house, which is out of the fog, and up a hill. Mickleton (Englemore's friend) beams on us from the hall-door. It quite warms me to see him: he is so round and jolly. He has gaiters on, having apparently only just this minute come in from farming.

"Welcome to Walnut House!" cries our host, heartily.

We descend; and the introduction takes place in Englemore's own peculiar style.

"Professor Mickleton." He is only plain Mister, of course.

Then, turning to me, "The Colonel. He wants to learn all the little fakements of farming, and all round my garden in twenty minutes. Eh, Professor?"

Mr. Mickleton replies, smiling, "It's rather late *now*, Englemore."

I interpose, politely, that I wouldn't on any account think of trying to see the farm at this hour. Too late, and too dark.

"Don't know that," says Englemore, thoughtfully. "Might have little Tommy Torchlight out with us, eh? New idea. Good picture for *Illustrated*: 'Torchlight Visit of the Royal Party to

Professor Mickleton's Farm.' Also article, 'All among the Pigs.' What time's Mister Grub?"

"Three quarters of an hour from now," answers our host; and forthwith invites us into the drawing-room.

Here we are introduced to Mrs. Mickleton, who is sewing something or other of a fluffy character.

She expresses her pleasure at seeing us, and subsides, without another word, into her knitting, or whatever it is.

"All Chickabiddies straight?" inquires Englemore, who has at once established himself on the hearth-rug.

"The children?" asks Mrs. Mickleton, looking up for a second. Englemore nods.

"Quite well, thank you," she answers, resuming her work.

I don't see, as yet, my way towards interesting Mrs. Mickleton in a conversation.

Happy Thought.—Weather and children. Effect of climate on youth.

"I suppose," I say, "you find this place agree with them wonderfully?"

I don't know the reason for my supposing anything of the kind, as I've only been here ten minutes, and haven't seen anything at all of the place itself. Still, it *is* the Country, and not London: at least, this I imagine to be the basis of my observation.

Mrs. Mickleton is obliged to desist in her work, I find, every other second minute, in consequence of the fluffy stuff rubbing off and flying to her nose, which she is forced to rub irritably.

"This place?" she returns, after a second's friction of the point of her nose with her right forefinger, and then speaking very slowly. "This place? No, indeed; I wonder we manage to keep alive here at all. My husband's away all day. There's no society. As you may imagine, it's very dull."

Between each of her sentences she does two or three stitches, and then, just as I feel that she is expecting me to start some topic, or agree with her, or, at all events, say something, she resumes her discourse. Her method is: take up discourse, drop stitch; take up stitch, drop discourse. Simple. She has finished now, and I observe that, of course, if there is no one here, it must be very dull.

Happy Thought.—Mrs. Robinson Crusoe without a Friday.

“The garden,” I say, “must be a great pleasure.”

“Yes, if you understand it.” Stitches. “I don’t.” Stitches.

Happy Thought.—If a stitch in time saves nine, and if she is always in time, what a heap of labour she must economise during the year. (Think this out.)

She continues. “Mr. Mickleton doesn’t understand it, though he pretends he does.” Stitches.

“Then the Professor is Mister Van Umpug,” says Englemore, laughing it off, with a wink at me.

It occurs to me that Mrs. Mickleton must know more of her own husband than Englemore; and supposing she is right, of what use will he be to me? Why am I down here? Ah, I forgot; *his* line is farming.

“Mr. Mickleton is very much interested in farming, is he not?” I inquire, rather nervously.

She smiles, and has a difficulty with the fluff again, before she replies:

“Well, it quite depends upon the humour he’s in. He has a sort of sloppy, muddley place, that he calls his farm.” Stitches. “When he comes down early on Saturday, he walks about there in thick boots and gaiters, and talks a great deal of nonsense, I believe.” Stitches. “On Sundays he always makes a fuss about being obliged to inspect the farm.” Stitches. “But it’s only an excuse for not going to church.”

Here a sudden click and a whirr somewhere above my head startle me, and a sharp cuckoo note is repeated six times. Just as I have found out the situation of the clock, a little door over the face shuts with a snap, and the Cuckoo, much to my disappointment, has vanished.

It may be childish, but, on the instant, I feel that, henceforth, my one object in this house is no longer to consult Mickleton on farming, but to see that Cuckoo when he re-appears to tell us the hour. It occurs to me, as quite a sporting sensation, that I should almost like to take the time exactly from the clock-face, and be underneath with a bow and arrow, or drawing-room pistol, to have a shot at him when he next ventures out.

Happy Thought.—Adopt the idea for Hurlingham instead of real live pigeons. All the amusement, double the fun, and none of the cruelty.

“Chirpy Chap, eh?” Englemore remarks, alluding to the Cuckoo, “shouldn’t care about him in a bed-room. Should make him touch the harp gently, my pretty Louise, or shut him up altogether. Hallo, Professor, time for Sammy Soapsuds, eh?”

“Yes,” replies Mickleton, understanding Englemore to mean that it is time to prepare for dinner—(he himself has taken off his gaiters and has been putting himself to rights),—“no dress, unless you prefer it. I shan’t. I say,” he exclaims, as if something very brilliant had occurred to him, “I’ve got such a riddle for you.”

“My name’s Mister Give-it-up,” replies Englemore, easily.

I ask, not being in the least interested, what it is.

Mickleton chuckling over it as if in anticipation of our roars of laughter and delight when we hear it, says,

“Well, I made it myself the other day, and I asked Bagster—you know,” to Englemore. “Sam Bagster, our clergyman here——”

Englemore nods, and by way of describing him to me, says,

“Mister White Choker, wall eyed. Little off his chump. Go on.”

“He’s all right now,” Mickleton tells him.

“Glad of it,” returns Englemore; “but what’s Colonel Conundrum?”

Mickleton, who appears to have suddenly forgotten it, rubs his head.

“Ah yes, of course. Well, it’s this. Why”—here he breaks off to implore me to tell if I’ve heard it before. I assure him I haven’t.

“I know it as far as you’ve gone at present,” observes Englemore, “Go a-head!”

Mickleton goes a-head. “Why is a Duck,” here he looks suspiciously at me, as much as to say, “Now you *have* heard this before, only out of politeness you won’t tell me so”—“Why is a Duck like a Charlatan Doctor?”

“The answer begins with ‘Because,’” says Englemore; “I’ll swear to that.”

"Ah, you know it!" cries Mickleton. But we assure him that we do not. Will he relieve our anxiety, and tell us?

He will, with the greatest pleasure.

"The answer is," he says, "because they *both quack*." Then he roars with laughter. We only ripple, to begin with, and should drop the subject, but for his boisterously appealing to us, "Good, eh? Isn't it? You've never heard it before?"

Happy Thought.—Never.

We all laugh. So heartily; but Mickleton heartier than either of us. He tells us again, "that he made it himself."

We say, did he, really? and, of course, laugh again.

We, still laughing, and repeating to ourselves, "Yes, Quack, very good!" take our chamber candlesticks, thinking we are going to escape.

But——



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RIDDLEMAKER AT HOME—NOTHING ABOUT GARDENING—TAKEN IN—TIRED—THE PROFESSOR—PUTTING FOOT IN IT—TAKING FOOT OUT OF IT—BOYS—MARIANA—ALL ABOUT IT—LAST CHANCE—GONE.



AS WE are about to leave the room, Mickleton stops us.

"Look here!" he says, chuckling again, and more than ever, "I've got another. Only tell me if you've heard it before."

We promise him and stand in attentive attitudes. (Wonder if he's got many of these.

"I don't think you have heard it," he goes on; "because I made it myself."

Happy Thought.—Hope he doesn't make many things himself. Wine, for instance. I remember home-made wine, *once*.

"This is it. 'When does an Alderman go on four legs?'"

"When he rides," suggests Englemore.

"No, that's not it!" chuckles Mickleton, delighted at his first failure.

"I can't guess," I reply.

"O, you *can*."

"No, indeed, I can't. I never could."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he laughs heartily. "I asked lots of fellows in the City, and they couldn't make it out at all. Old Bumper bothered himself over it for half an hour or more, and as to

Magendie I thought he'd have gone into fits when he heard the answer. Ha ! Ha ! Ha !"

"What is it ?" asks Englemore.

We are both getting hungry, and I've just stopped a yawn.

"I'll tell you," replies Mickleton, winking rather to himself than at either of us, "An Alderman goes on four legs when he becomes a *Mare*. Eh ? Good ? isn't it ?"

"Ah, I see," says Englemore. "Lord Mayor." "Capital." "Capital," I echo. Then both keeping up a laugh, we once more attempt the door, Englemore observing that he's afraid we shall be late.

The Cuckoo coming out at that instant, is of the same opinion. He only rushes out for one second, or less, to cry "Cuckoo" at the half-hour, and jumps in again, banging the door after him, as if he'd got private and important business to attend to within at which he musn't be disturbed on any account. He was too quick for me, and I haven't seen him, as yet.

"Half-past six," I say, moving towards the door.

"Plenty of time," observes our host, "we're never very punctual. By the way," here he stops us once more, "talking of riddles,"—we weren't, but that is of no consequence to *him*—"I made one the other day as I was going up in the train."

We can't help ourselves. Englemore can only murmur sadly, "Colonel Conundrum," and yield. I never saw a man so suddenly and completely depressed as Englemore after these two riddles, and in the presence of a third.

Happy Thought.—Look at my watch and slightly yawn.

No good. Mickleton *must* tell us this. If we've heard it will we say so ? "Why is a Charity-boy——"

Brilliantly Happy Thought.—Yes, we *have* heard it. Very old one.

"No, no, it's not the one I mean," he says.

"Quite the same," returns Englemore, turning the door-handle. Mickleton goes on,—

"When is a Charity-boy like a blue-bottle ?"

"Give it up, Massa Bones," says Englemore, in despair.

Do I give it up ? Certainly. Certainly. What is it ?

"Well," says Mickleton, amazingly delighted at his third success, "the answer is, when he's *buzzy*. Ha! ha! ha!" He roars at it.

We are a bit sulky. Englemore observes that it's not so good as the others. I agree with him.

"No!" exclaims Mickleton. "Then I've got a better. It's a first-rate one. I met little Pinker at Birch's the other day, and asked him. He said it was the best thing he'd ever heard. Look here. 'When is the President of the United States——'"

Here the door is pushed open from the outside. Mrs. Mickleton enters in full dress.

"What, James! not gone to dress yet? It really *is* too bad. The dinner will be spoilt, and I shall be kept waiting."

Here a bell rings loudly.

Happy Thought.—Leave the Riddlemaker to explain. We go to our rooms.

I've come down here to learn about Gardening and Farming, and he's not said a word on those subjects at present. Englemore calls him Professor. Of what? Conundrum-making?

Happy Thought.—Dinner.

We have a very pleasant dinner. Mickleton introduces different wines to us of rare excellence.

Remembering that I have come to learn a great deal from him about farming, I try to turn the conversation in this direction.

It appears that if there is a subject which both Mickleton and his wife carefully avoid, it is farming. As for horticulture, Mrs. Mickleton informs me that "she has become quite tired of flowers." Speaking, I think, at her husband, who, while pretending to be completely absorbed in giving Englemore the remarkable history of a dinner claret, is clearly uncomfortable, she goes on to say,

"The fact is, I have been so long down here without seeing anything except flowers, or anybody except the gardener, that I have become utterly weary of them."

With a secret feeling that I am siding with my hostess against my host, but that he, as a man of the world, will understand this politeness, I reply, "Well, yes, I suppose that it must be a trifle dull."

"*Very* dull," she returns emphatically. "It's all very well for you gentlemen who have got your Clubs and your business in town, to come down for a day *now* and *then*," (such a look at Mickleton, who smiles feebly at Englemore), "and say you enjoy the country so much. But it would be a very different thing if you were obliged to stay here, all alone, from one year's end to the other."

"O, well?" exclaims Mickleton, jovially, "we'll take a house in town for the season, next year, and you'll enjoy this place all the more when you return."

"My dear James," replies Mrs. Mickleton, with a sarcastic smile, "you've *said* that every year as long as I can remember, but you've never done it."

Mickleton tries to laugh it off, and I see that by showing myself interested in farming and gardening, I have evidently put my foot in it.

Happy Thought.—Take my foot out of it. Change the topic at once. Ask Mickleton if he's going up to town to-morrow. He frowns at me rapidly, and shakes his head. I've put my other foot in it. It seems that I've got both feet in it, as Mrs. Mickleton takes the reply into her own mouth.

"Of course he'll go up early to-morrow."

"Business," I hint, faintly, in order to do Mickleton a friendly turn.

"There can't be much *business* going on, as my husband is always complaining of what's *not* being done in the City; but if he makes a new Conundrum, or thinks of a good story, he's not happy till he has gone up to the office and told it to all the people who *call themselves* his friends."

"My dear!" interposes Mickleton, evidently wishing to restrain his wife's remarks before us and in the presence of the footman. However, as a large stand with an enormous bush occupies the centre of the table, he is hidden from her as completely as I am from Englemore, whose eye I only manage to catch through the leaves, or by dodging a little on one side.

It's quite true, my dear," she continues. "And then, Mr. Englemore, just before dinner I often receive a telegram to say he

won't be down that evening, in consequence of having to meet somebody who is of the greatest importance to him."

"Well," says the unfortunate Conundrum-maker, "I *do* have to meet people who are of great business importance to me, at dinner."

We (his Guests) smile.

I say, "Of course you have," and smile. Englemore winks privately at Mickleton, but is detected by Mrs. Mickleton, when he laughs, and observes that "Boys will be boys," which, though meant kindly, does not exercise a soothing influence on our hostess.

"Boys, indeed," she says. "I should think so. From what I've heard, they're a nice set of boys, too, on the Stock Exchange. And when he stops in town, as he's always doing—on *business*—he comes back with a lot of Conundrums, as if his trade was to make Christmas crackers, and then he drives all over the country asking these. But it's very dull for me down here, as you may imagine."

Happy Thought.—Mariana in the Moated Grange.

Luckily, at this moment, Englemore changes the conversation by asking Mrs. Mickleton if she'll assist him at his House-Warming, when he proposes having Theatricals and a Ball.

Mariana of the Moated Grange jumps at the idea. So does Mickleton. So do I. Anything to get rid of the unpleasant subject. We all go in heartily for Englemore's scheme.

Mickleton, seeing his wife in so excellent a frame of mind, won't hear of her quitting the room, as she is the only lady, and it would be dull for her in the drawing-room. She stops with us.

Consequence of this is that the only topics interesting to *me* are tabooed, and I have come down here for—nothing.

It's late in the year. The Gardeners from Gutch's are, I suppose, hard at work at the Nook. I should like to ask Mickleton, who, I still believe *does* farm (or why should he have received us dressed in a shooting-coat, clodhopping boots, and gaiters?), what one ought to do in the garden at this time—viz., just the end of the year.

Will catch him in the morning. I decide upon this to myself while they are discussing the house-warming.

Mickleton asks ten Conundrums—his wife encouraging him now—before we take our candles for bed.

Mickleton comes up to see that I'm "all comfortable."

Opportunity not to be lost.

Happy Thought.—Seriously, before going to bed, I ask him, "You know all about gardening. What would you do in a small garden at this time of year, with only one gardener and a help?"

He pauses to consider. He looks at the floor. Then he looks up, shakes his head knowingly, and replies, "I know; I've heard it before. It's like the ship weighing anchor, and drawing four feet of water, and what's the name of the Captain? Smith, eh?"

He thinks it's a riddle. I am about to disabuse him of this notion, when Englemore looks in, and says,

"Hallo! Colonel Conundrum out again?" Whereupon he and Mickleton both laugh heartily, the latter observing, jocularly, something about an old bird not being caught so easily; and then they both say "Good-night!" and retire.

Evidently I shan't get much gardening information out of Colonel Conundrum. What a habit for a man to get into!

* * * * *

A Truly Happy Thought.—This being such peculiarly unseasonable weather for going down to The Nook to see how Gutch's men and the new Gardener are getting on—accept Englemore's invitation to stay in town for a night or two, as he says he particularly wants to consult me (and the Mickletons) on his forthcoming theatricals and fancy ball.

Note.—Received telegram from my galvanised Aunt. Be home day after to-morrow. Our party, little Uncles and Nurse, &c., to be moved at once to The Nook. As I shan't be up in Town again for some time, more reason to take advantage of it now.

CHAPTER XXIX.

• RETURN OF MY AUNT—THE NOOK AFTER THE LATE RAINS—A
SURPRISE—THE END IN VIEW.



WHEN I see the front garden from over the gate I hardly know The Nook again. It is as much changed for the better as a slovenly man who has had his hair cut.

My Aunt has arrived. She has been ganlavisied for the Neuralgia, and is quite well again ; which, however, she says, she has no doubt would have been the result if she'd undergone the treat samement at home. She is at first a little annoyed with me about the Glymphyns, because she had predetermined a match ; and, secondly, she is astonished at my not having met her at the Station. These matters are, subsequently, duly explained.

Little Uncle Jack and Gill are also here. When we appear at the front gate, they are playing at horses on the gravel-path, which seems to be, I point out to Englemore, nicely dry in spite

of the rain. They are affectionate children. On seeing me, they run away, crying. "They think you're 'Bogie,'" Englemore remarks. They've gone indoors to summon my Aunt.

The old woman left in charge of the house comes to the front door. She recognises me, and sniffs. She prepares for my reception by giving her face a rub round with the corner of her apron, and then she opens the gate, stands behind it nervously, and curtseys.

"Mrs. Bascoe in?" I ask. It may be remembered, but it probably is not, that my Aunt's name is Bascoe.

"Yes, sir," says the old woman. "The lady come as the day before yezzerday. She ain't been altogether well since comin', she ain't. Werry damp it is for them as ain't used to't."

"Damp."

"Your name must be Mister Drainage," says Englemore, surveying the lawn. "The ground here's like a greasy sponge. Not nice, Colonel Greasy Sponge, eh?"

"What's to be done?" I ask, for I see that the cottage is in a similar position to what the Ark must have been in after the first half-inch of water had subsided.

"When I came," says my Aunt, after the first salutations and congratulations are over, "you had to walk through one big puddle to the front door, and you couldn't put your foot out of the French windows——"

"Without putting your foot in it," suggests Englemore.

My Aunt nods, and continues—"The revandah was a perfectly swopeless homp."

"Sammy Swamp," says Englemore, translating the phrase in his own fashion. "Your Aunt's right. Look at it now."

I do look at it, and in another second it occurs to me that the masons and builders left here some time since to put everything in order, have achieved a triumph of constructive skill by sloping the pavement of the verandah *from the garden down to the house!!*

"Mister Cellar below, eh?" asked Englemore.

"Yes, but nothing in it."

"Plenty of water by now. Little Tommy Temperature increases; William Water ditto. Steam up. General Damp—everywhere. No dry goods store." He shakes his head ruefully.

My Aunt puts her hand to her side, in anticipation of rheumatic effects.

I turn to him, and on him, rather savagely, "Hang it, Englemore, *you* recommended the place. You said 'Nook'——"

"And you Nooked. Good boy. But your little Englemore didn't know about Colonel Clay-soil, and he didn't give orders ot Mister Builder."

I admit this. I remark that the garden, considering all things, looks promising.

He cheers me up on this score. "Very promising. It'll be Little All-right if you give it time. Builder must put this square, or no £ s. d. Touch up the cellar. Dry your eyes. Ring up again, and go on with the next performance."

He is right. If drained properly, and so forth, I am sure there can't be a healthier spot than The Nook.

"The bloom is on the rye as far as the children go," says Englemore.

My Aunt replies, "Yes, I'm glad to see them with such cheesy rokes."

We are recovering our good-humour.

Happy Thought.—Make the best of a *good* job; for it is a good job done, excepting the builder, who must have been a perfect fool. Talking of perfect fools, how's my new Gardener getting on? "Not that he's a perfect fool," I say pleasantly, smiling: "on the contrary, he appeared to be a very intelligent——"

"Did he!" my Aunt says, dubiously. "Well, I can't make him out myself. Nor anyone else, I should say. He's got odd ways of going on."

Happy Thought.—Perhaps he has begun his "fancy gardening," and my Aunt doesn't understand it.

"At times,—I don't wish to frighten you, or myself, or anybody," she says, with great consideration, whereat Englemore nods approvingly,—"but at times I think he's queer."

"At *odd* times," suggests Englemore.

But as my Aunt looks uncommonly serious, Englemore frowns at me, as if *I* had made an inopportune joke.

"Queer?" I repeat, and look at Englemore, who, unseen by my

Aunt, goes through a pantomimic performance of lifting up his hand to his mouth, pretending to take a draught, and then touching his forehead significantly.

"You mean that he drinks?" I say to Englemore.

"Liquor's his name," he returns, nodding affirmatively.

"He frightened that old rag-doll of a woman whom you've put to keep house here," my Aunt continues; "and, though I don't understand much about gardening myself, yet it doesn't seem to me that he's going on right."

The Rag-Doll meets us in the passage, and corroborates this statement. "Nuffin ain't been right since he come, and Gutch's men left. I raily don't think as he's safe with a pick, or a 'oe, and childern about."

I inquire as to his habits. She has seen him at meals.

"No, Sir, he don't drink, leastways not nuffin to speak on, but he's strange. His second day here he dashed in among them salary beds quite like a mad person."

"Good gracious! I hope he's not a luniac!" my Aunt exclaims.

"I ain't not so sure o' that, Mum," says the Rag-Doll, sniffing and retiring, first behind her apron, which she holds up to her face, and sniffs over its corner at us; then, under that cover, she backs down the passage, and goes sideways into the kitchen.

All my Gardener's information concerning the Mikado, Japanese Gardening, and the Duke of Shetland, flashes across me. I do not feel comfortable as I enter the Kitchen Garden.

"Hallo!" exclaims Englemore; and we all three stand in utter amazement at the scene before us.

Happy Thought.—Fancy Gardening certainly.

One part of the place looks as if it had been devastated by a fearful storm, while another seems to have suffered from some eccentric convulsion of nature, which has sent the roots up in the air and fixed the tops downwards in the earth. This is the case with the cabbages. The new currant-bushes are tied on to the tops of the highest trees, looking very like those Dutch brooms which a landsman often notices with wonder at the mast-heads of fishing smacks. The celery beds are completely dug up, looking like a troubled sea in dirty weather, with the exception of one

small patch in the centre, where we observe a stone jar standing, labelled legibly *Mixed Pickles*. Garden tools, all brand new, which he has bought on his own account, are, we see, planted out in a row, like young trees, and carefully propped up. An empty milk-pail is by the strawberry-beds, which have been filled with young plants. At the end of the garden, by the wall, we now catch sight of a smoking bonfire, which is just beginning to blaze. The Fancy Gardener is at present invisible.

"Mad as a hatter!" Englemore says, emphatically.

Evidently. But what an awful state of things.

We walk down the Kitchen Garden path in some trepidation. A mad Gardener might be waiting behind a bush, or a hedge, with some instrument, and jump out suddenly—Ah! there he is. *Now*.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST OF THE NOOK—DE LUNATICO INQUIRENDO—FURTHER INFORMATION—TO LET—FINISH.



WE SEE the Gardener approaching. Up the kitchen garden walk : dancing. A flower-pot is on his head, which drops off, and a whip is in his hand. His hair anyhow ; he hasn't got as far as straws.

"He's a raming maviac !" exclaims my Aunt, and with great presence of mind begins to retreat slowly towards the house, keeping her thumb on the spring of her sunshade ; having a vague idea that to put it up suddenly is a staggerer for a lunatic. I hope she won't do it, as it might make him worse.

"Colonel Cut," says Englemore, briefly.

I beg him to be calm, and pretend not to notice anything extraordinary in the Gardener's manner.

Happy Thought.—Pretend.

We go to work to pretend. My Aunt retreating. I say to the man, "How are you getting on?"

"Well," he replies briskly. "The Mikado himself couldn't wish

for more, except glass with care. Here's a treat for his Royal Highness!"

He lifts up a flower-pot, and shows us, planted underneath, an upright stick with a red herring fastened to it by a bit of red ribbon.

"That's my idea," he says, with pride. "That's ornamental and fancy gardening. I'm burning Guy Fawkes at the end there." Then he adds, mysteriously, "Not a word to the Duke."

Pointing to the garden implements all planted in a row, he asks, "What do you think of that?"

Englemore replies, nervously, "Capital! couldn't be better."

"You don't think so," returns the Gardener, suspiciously.

Happy Thought.—To go on pretending. I feign an interest in this plantation. What is its object? Is it Japanese? I ask.

"Do you know who the Mikado is?" he asks.

Englemore, regaining courage, suggests, "Japanese Tommy?"

"Tommy!" shouts the mad Gardener (for there is no doubt about it any longer). "You aint a Fortyfold Jersey Blue, are you?"

Englemore nervously twitches my sleeve, and wants me to come away. No, I must keep my eye on him.

Happy Thought.—Detain him in conversation while some one goes for a Policemen. Who? Englemore might stay with him, while I go and fetch a Constable. How to communicate this to Englemore? Await opportunity.

"These will grow and be fruitful. Hush! Don't you hear the seeds coming up. Why, if you want to know all about gardening, you must stand on your head and listen. Can you stand on your head?"

"No; but then you see I'm not a Gardener."

"I can. So can celery sauce."

Happy Thought.—Here's an opportunity. While he's on his head secure his legs.

He does not, however, alter his position. He continues, cunningly, "I don't, and I won't, because of my hair. Turnips, carrots, and The White Incomparable can do what they like—I say

nothing ; it's not my business, having been His Majesty's faithful servant for years—— But"—here he creeps up to me cautiously and whispers—"who's the Emerald Ringleader, with orchids in his eyes, who's hiding in the ivy?"

Englemore says, briskly, "We'll have him out. I'll go and collar him."

The man stops him, taking Englemore by the arm. Englemore looks at me helplessly. The Gardener holds him fast.

"Don't!" he whispers hurriedly. "Don't do it! He's an *Odontoglossos Pelargonium*? If he's disturbed he'll shoot me."

"No he won't," says Englemore, soothingly.

"*He will!*" cries the unfortunate lunatic emphatically.

"The Mikado has sent him for the turnip-juice. He's got a pistol!"

"Has he!" says Englemore, more nervously than ever, and not liking to contradict him again.

"*Has he?*" the Gardener exclaims, ironically. "*Why you know he has!* You're a *Gladiolus Gandavensis*. But they've only put grapes in it. *I've got a bullet in mine!*"

Good heavens!

Happy Thought.—I ask him, as calmly as I can, to show me the weapon.

He releases Englemore (who takes this opportunity of getting near the kitchen-door), and fumbles in a breast pocket of his waistcoat.

"With a flowering stock," he murmurs to himself. "I always keep 'em by me. I've written a letter about 'em, and I thought you'd kindly give it to the Duke for me."

He is wandering again, and I begin to think the pistol is a myth, I assure him that I will take every care of his letter if he will intrust it to me. Or——

Happy Thought.—He can, I suggest, himself take it to the post-office in the village.

Once out, he shan't come in again. Only couldn't I be indicted for turning a madman out loose on the road? To lock him up would be best. But where? His room is in a small cottage on the premises next the stable. If he could only be enticed in there?

Happy Thought.—"Where's your coat?" I ask him.

He shakes his head and smiles. "I burnt it, so as to put 'em off the scent. Chickweed and cinders is what we must come to at the last." He suddenly bestirs himself. "Earth up celery! Right shoulders forward! Dress vines, top, dibble, and dust-pans!" Then he adds, with a wink of inexpressible slyness, "train up your Gloxinias in silk stockings, and you'll soon seen who's the chumpy Radish." Then suddenly, "You'll excuse me for a moment, but there's a friend of mine at the bottom of the pond, and I must just go and see him. It's after hours, you know." He bows with the utmost politeness, and walks away hurriedly.

Now what am I to do?

Happy Thought.—Go in-doors, and keep him out.

So much is certain to begin with. And so much I do. The Rag-Doll housekeeper says, "I didn't like to tell you afore——"

This is so odd. Servants never *do* like to acquaint you with anything unpleasant—(specially in the way of breakages, when after being dumb for months they are quite surprised to find that only one out of your two dozen choice pet glasses remains uninjured—the fractures having, of course, happened "afore they came to the place")—until you know all about it yourself, when you find that *they* have known it for ever so long, generally, "since they first comed."

She says, "I didn't like to tell you afore,"—sniff, and corner of apron used—"but the young man as seemed strange, as I said, Sir,"—sniff, apron, curtsy—"but he keeps on a saying as there's some pusson with a long name 'id in the hivy, which he has a loaded firearms to go to look after him with."

"Have you seen it?"

"No, not azackly;"—sniff—"leastways, I've heard it as he was shootin' them spurrows."

"A gun?" asks Englemore.

"No, Sir," answers the Rag-Doll; "which it ain't nor azackly a gun, nor yet a pistol, nor blomblebuss, but them new things as goes round 'a round and off ever so many times at once; an' I think as the young man said as it were a garden name, convovulus, or such like."

"Revolver!" exclaims my Aunt, who has a good ear for verbal mistakes.

"Werry likely, Mum." Sniff. "I knowd it were sumfin o' that. Look, Mum, if he ain't at it now."

From the window we see him. He is half hidden behind an apple-tree, but we catch a glimpse of one arm with a pistol in its hand, changing its aim every second.

We lock all the doors.

"You see," says Englemore, "it isn't safe for Major Madman to be about. Colonel Constable ought to be on in this scene."

"Heavens!" exclaims my Aunt, "you see if one of us go out, he might shoot, thinking it was his enemy coming out of the ivy. I wish we had never come down here."

Decided. Aunt, little Uncles, and Nurse to go to town *at once*. Englemore to see them from the front gate down to the railway, and to call in on his way for police.

The whole kitchen garden is in utter disorder. The "Luniac" is now engaged in breaking a few glass frames with a rake, occasionally stopping to draw his pistol, and present it at some imaginary foe.

If the police won't come, and if it's illegal to take up a mad servant, then, what shall we do when the night comes on, and we can't see where he is?

I watch him from the first-floor window.

He has got a ladder. He is coming towards the house.

Happy Thought.—Get behind a curtain. Musn't let him see me.

He stops. He fixes the ladder so that the top comes within a foot of my window. I see it shaking, and he is coming up. I know that his pistol is in his pocket. In his left hand he holds a string with a large Spanish onion tied to it.

"Creepers up here," I hear him saying, "because of the cats." He balances himself on the ladder, swinging the onion to and fro. Presently it comes, like a stone from a sling, against the window, smashing a pane to atoms. "Oh my coniferous Geranium!" I hear him saying, and am conscious of the revolver being pointed towards the broken glass.

Suddenly he turns on the ladder, roars with laughter, throws the pistol at something or somebody below, and slides down like a

schoolboy on bannisters. I venture to look out. Two respectable looking men have got him by the arms; they are talking amicably, and Englemore, from below, is making signs for me not to interrupt. Presently the unhappy man and his two keepers disappear. Englemore comes up and explains.

"He is quite off his nut. Been little Master Out-of-the-Way for three weeks. Met Colonel Keeper in the village. From information received, he came up here and nobbled him."

I announce my intention of shutting up The Nook till the spring time. Perhaps altogether.

"You see," I say to Englemore, "To keep up a place like this——"

"Mister Farm of Four Acres," he observes, parenthetically. "Yes, Colonel; go ahead."

"Well—I mean it's very expensive, unless it's ready made to hand."

"Yes. Turnips on Tap, Pig in the Pound, Greasy Grass and Swan Swum over the Swamp. Daniel Drainage, Dicky Dirt, and the great Dismal Damp. I know. Rheumatics murder sleep. No door-mat to-night."

"You agree with me that I'd better give it up for the present?" I ask.

"Well," begins Englemore, with a certain amount of hesitation. And then he says, with decision, "The fact is, I think your name had better be Walker. Let it while you can. You may have some difficulty."

"In letting The Nook? What?—rent too high?"

"No. But I've only just heard, here, that it has the reputation of being——" He hesitates.

"What?"

"Haunted. Your own private Ghost on the premises. Direks and Pepper. How's your poor Goblin?"

"That decides me. We go. My Aunt couldn't live in a——"

"In a 'Aunted house," says Englemore, adding "Mister Shakespeare," by way of giving his authority for the pun.

"I don't believe in ghosts," I say, stoutly.

Englemore winks. "Give a ghest a bad name, and there you

are. There wouldn't be the ghost of a chance of letting The Nook if it smelt of spirits."

He is probably right. And so we decide. The Nook is To Let.

In the spring-time I may be on the look-out for some new Rural Retreat, where the absence of Mister Drainage is not a drawback. Any more difficulties with Gardeners would turn my hair grey. For the present my name is London. Perhaps, one of these fine days—I mean on any day when a ray may induce us to believe once more in the Solar System—I may find the Paradise which shall be all my fancy painted.

Till then, Farewell.



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